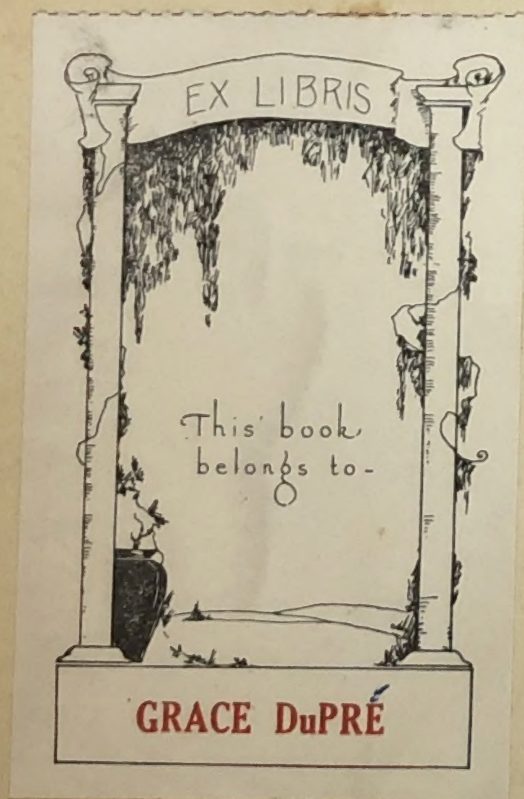




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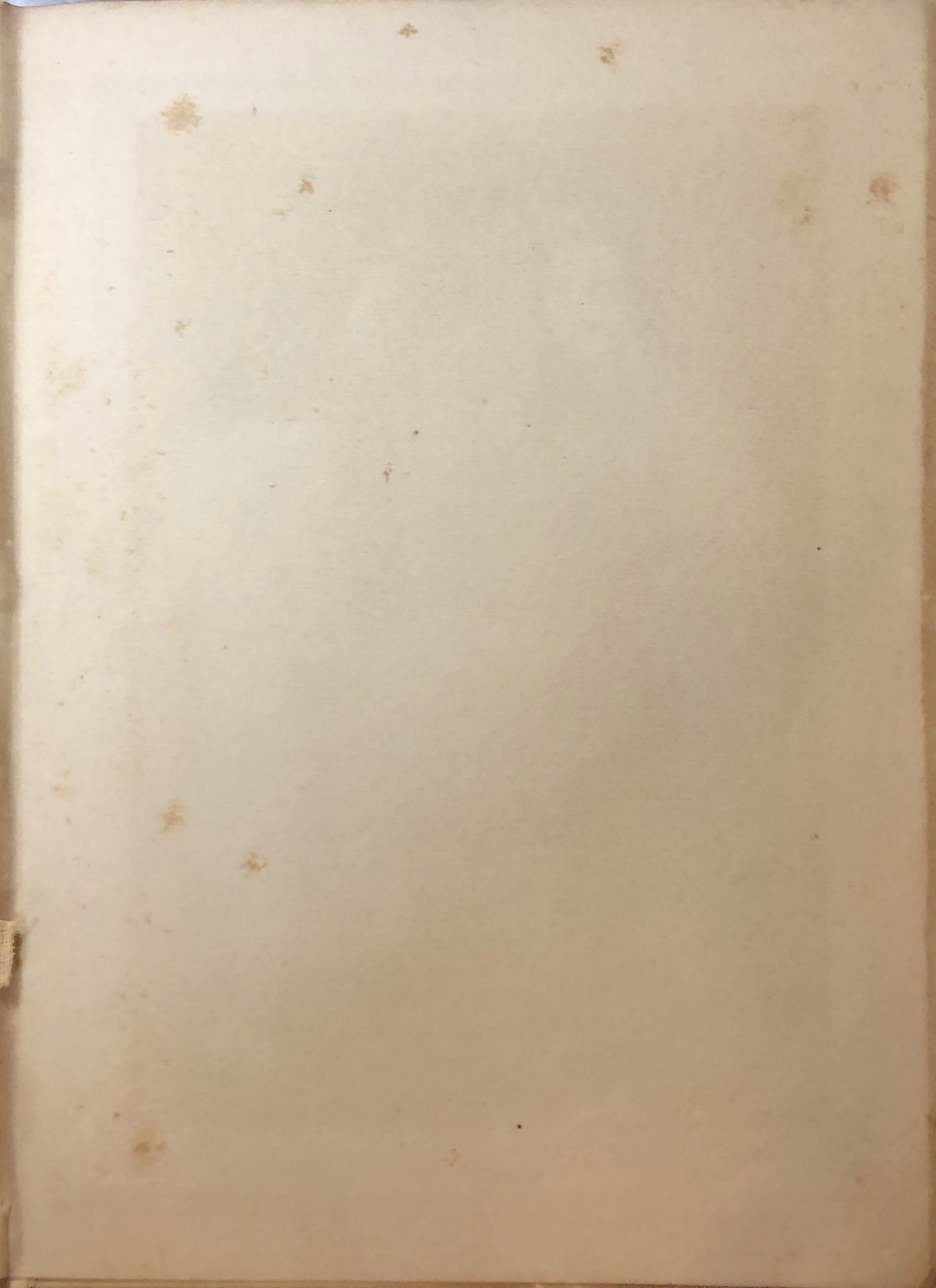
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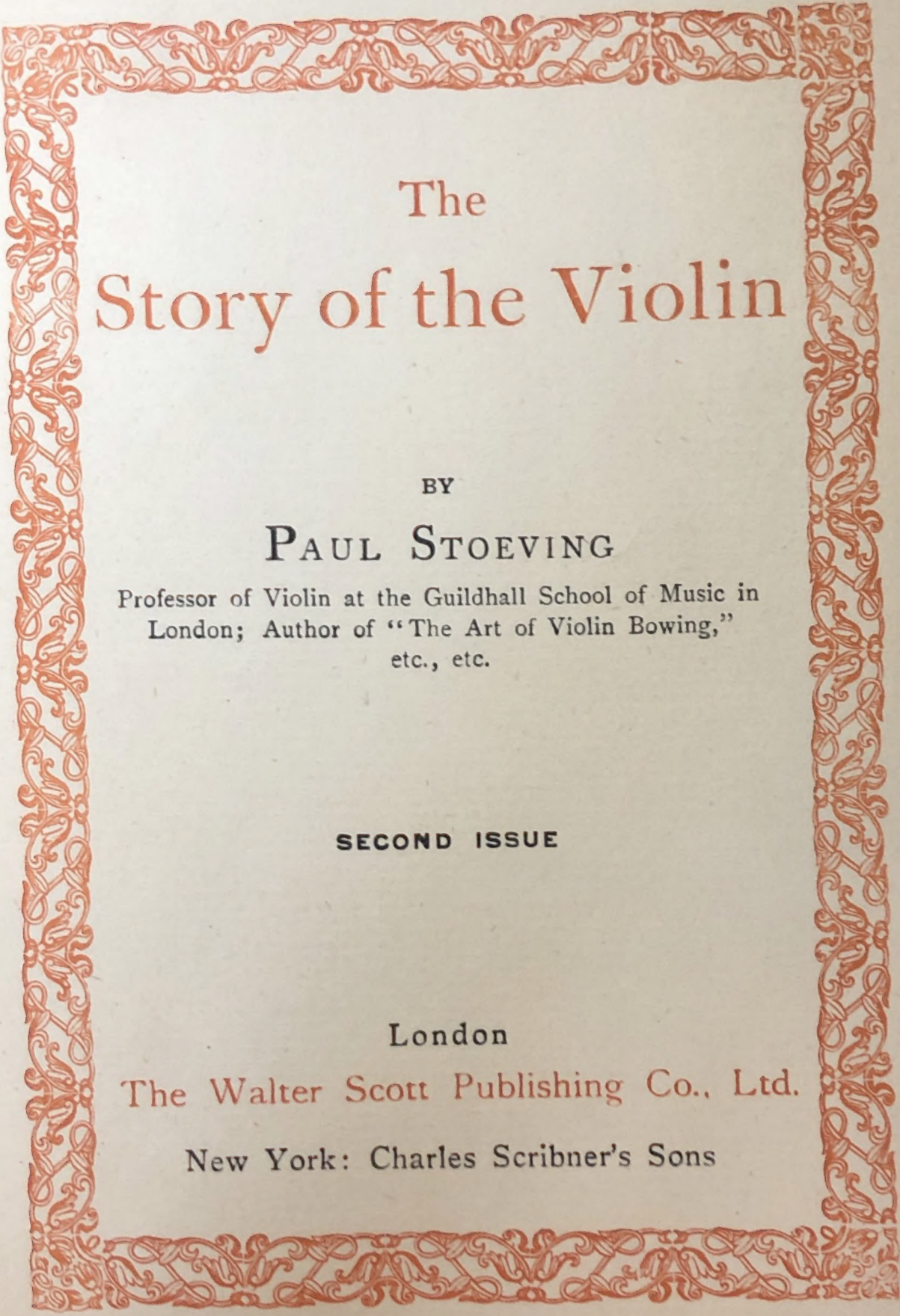




ST CECILIA BY DOMENICHINO  
from the picture in the Louvre Collection.

*Eng. by J. Widdington*





# The Story of the Violin

BY

PAUL STOEVIING

Professor of Violin at the Guildhall School of Music in  
London; Author of "The Art of Violin Bowing,"  
etc., etc.

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ESTEEM.







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## Prologue

THE Violin—what a wonderful thing a violin is! Muse over it—its tone, its form, its history, and its position in the world of art to-day—and you stand facing a miracle. Something miraculous, mysterious—call it what you will, divine purpose, divine power—seems to lie behind this frail little handiwork of man.

Once, in its crude primeval form, in the dim ages of antiquity, it was perhaps the most despised and neglected of instruments; then, after centuries of slow development, which seemed Its History like the groping through darkness towards light, it burst upon the world two or three hundred years ago in a perfection which human wit has never since been able to improve upon.

It was the robin's song in March, ushering in the new spring; the lovely first-fruit of a new age, a new dispensation, a new spirit on the earth— Its Advent not only the spirit of modern musical art, but the spirit of a more enlightened, spiritualised humanity, of greater charity and general brotherhood.

With gospel-truth rapidity the little miracle of form and sound has penetrated since to all quarters of the



# Story of the Violin

globe, carrying its sweet influence—joy, comfort, new hope, new faith, and new strength, and all the lovely flowers of the soul—alike to rich and poor, Its Mission into the palace and the hut. What would this world of ours be to-day without its violin? Both king and lowly servant of the art, what is it not, dear, blessed little instrument! The master-minds of composition drew inspiration from it, sovereign soul of our orchestra; it holds us spellbound, thrills and moves us in the artist's hands; it forms part of the scanty luggage of the emigrant to keep him company on his lonely farm out west when winter evenings are long and thoughts will wander back to the old homestead far across the sea. How eminently fitted, too, it is for its high mission among men!

Who will describe it, tone of a Stradivari violin, when the true artist draws it from its hiding-place?

Its Tone That indescribably sweet voice—voice of an angel and yet ringing with the dear familiar sound of earth, with earthly passions, joys and woes and ecstasies; intensely human and yet so superhuman that the soul is seized with hopeless longing to follow it, to float with it through realms unknown and infinite, charged, we know not how, with music or with love. Yes, indescribably sweet voice, where thou endest the music of the spheres begins. (Or, is it that perhaps which rises from the petals of flowers in wondrous exhalations, half-perfume and half-melody, and, trembling in the sunlight, draws the bee to the honey?)

Was ever form more perfect symbol of the tone, the



## Prologue

body of the soul within? Look at this fine creation of a famous master here before me on the table: what a delicious play of curves and colours;—  
the noble sphinx-like head from which it rolls **Its Form**  
down or unfolds itself (just as you look at it), in graceful and continuous arabesques;—the tender swell and modelling of the chest and back;—that amber colour deepening to a rich, an almost reddish brown towards the centre where the sound-life pulsates strongest, quickest! A corner of a Titian canvas, is it? Yes, or Rembrandt's. And behold the fine fibre of the wood shining through the varnish like the delicate roses through my lady's finger-nails! What can be finer? No wonder people love a violin like that, and yearn and starve themselves for it, and many a fair maiden, pretending only to inspect the wood, has ere long (no one seeing) pressed a furtive kiss on such a lovely form as this.

The enthusiast has had his say. But is that all? Look at this frail thing made of wood—only wood; it has withstood the stress of two whole centuries. I say the stress, for it has not been **Its Durability**  
stored away in a glass case like a relic or a picture only to be looked at. No, it has been used—used almost daily! and how used! With every touch of the friendly bow every fibre of its delicate body has quivered and trembled like the heart of a maiden under the first kiss of her lover. In agony have been born those thousand million tones which in two hundred years have issued from this body to delight man. And



## Story of the Violin

this is not all: imagine this frail and shaken body which weighs no more than about  $8\frac{1}{2}$  oz. avoirdupois, supporting—by a marvellous adjustment of its parts (by which resistance and elasticity of structure are held in perfect equilibrium)—supporting, I say, a tension, longitudinally, of about 88 lb., and a pressure, vertically, of 26 lb., or altogether a weight of over 100 lb. on its chest. A herculean task! Where, under such hard usage, would be the strongest engine ever devised by man? Worn out, disabled in a few years, the mighty steel bars would be tottering in their sockets.

Consider now what seems almost the crowning glory of this little miracle. The stamp of greatness is simplicity: we have it here. Some one  
Its Fabric and Construction has said you can construct a violin with a penknife as your only tool. That may be possible, be it little satisfactory. At all events it demonstrates the great simplicity of construction of an organism, the perfection of which has ever filled the thoughtful mind with awe and admiration. Wood and again wood, and fish-glue to hold the boards and blocks together, and the strings, besides this the varnish, that is all.

What can be simpler? Yet simplicity of fabric is here the outcome of the grandest complex labour of invention. Alter one item and you mar, if not destroy the whole. Change the position of the *ff* holes or the form of bridge, leave out the sound-post, and you take away the tone. As in the human body every part has respect to the whole and the whole to the parts, so



## Prologue

in this wondrous, sounding organism. We get in the tone the sum of all the conditions and activities which have their origin and *raison d'être* in this simplicity—besides fulfilling the demand for that enormous strength and durability.

It is this simplicity of construction, together with the convenient shape—viz., portability, which has helped to secure for the violin its phenomenal popularity. It made cheapness possible, Its Cheap-  
ness has made it the instrument for the poor as well as the rich, as once the ideal pattern given, inferior wood and workmanship could not annihilate the elementary virtues of the organism.

Yes, what a wonderful thing is a violin! While in every branch of human knowledge and activity every year marks new discoveries, and the apparent miracle to-day becomes the common thing to-morrow, the violin stands where it stood three hundred years ago, and every attempt at altering its form or any smallest part of it has been a dismal failure. Is it not as if for once human wit had reached its goal, as if the ideal hid in the heart of God had for once been grasped by man?





# Story of the Violin.

## *PART I.*

### CHAPTER I.

#### ORIGIN OF THE VIOLIN.

THE origin of the violin, it seems, is still a puzzle to our musical historians and archæologists. True, they know that the first real violin made its appearance on the musical horizon about the middle of the sixteenth century. They know, too, it did not spring into existence—to use a familiar phrase—like Minerva, armour-clad and beautiful, out of the head of Jupiter. Its gradual development from inferior forms of bow-instruments is proved beyond doubt, and has been traced, more or less clearly, for centuries back, with the help of representations of such instruments on monuments, bas-reliefs, wood carvings, miniatures, etc., and occasional allusions to them in contemporary literature—all collected by the untiring zeal of the antiquarian on the highways and byways of

Gradual  
Develop-  
ment



# Story of the Violin

mediæval Europe. But here—that is, about the ninth century of our era—all evidence, documentary and otherwise, for the existence of bow-instruments ceases, and we are left to drift on a sea of con-

**Are they a European Growth or an Eastern Importation?** conjecture as to their earlier whereabouts. Are they a European growth at all, or are they an Eastern importation? Is the time of their wanderings on earth to be measured by centuries only, or by thousands of years? Such are the questions which

musical historians are still endeavouring to answer satisfactorily.

**Greeks and Romans** The two great nations of antiquity to whom we are indebted, directly and indirectly, for so many of our most treasured possessions in philosophy, poetry, and art, and to whom we would naturally turn first for information on the subject—the

Greeks and Romans—give us no clue. We gain an insight into a highly ingenious system of music; we find descriptions of their popular instruments,

**An Insight into a Highly Ingenious System of Music** representations on bas-reliefs and terra-cotta vases of harps, lyres, citharas, flutes, etc., but no sign of an instrument which even the most determined and imaginative enthusiast could conscientiously construe into one likely to have been played with

a bow, much less a sign of such a contrivance as the bow itself. Equally unfruitful hitherto have been researches in Egyptian and Chaldean records of antiquities. While carrying us back thousands of



# Origin of the Violin

years, to the very morning, one might say, of creation, they reveal a state of civilisation in those most ancient nations simply astonishing, and this fact alone would permit us to draw significant conclusions as to the cultivation of music among them. There is also the unmistakable proof for it in the shape of representations of their musical instruments. We find them in considerable numbers and variety—played by men and women (whole musical parties and processions); single and in groups; crude and developed; and recognising among them plainly the ancestors of many of our own modern instruments, we might not unreasonably look in their company also for some sort of prehistoric fiddle—but in vain. The nearest approach to the form of a violin is an instrument, somewhat resembling a lute, provided with a finger-board and one or two strings. Burney<sup>1</sup> discovered such a one on an obelisk in Rome, and representations of similar ones have since been found in Egypt, dating back to 1500-2000 B.C.; also on Assyrian monuments, where they appear under conditions which make it probable that they were a foreign importation—perhaps from Egypt. But these instruments, though suggestive of the bowed kind, will hardly be taken seriously as belonging to them. Doubtless their strings were twanged like those of the harp, lyre, cithara, etc. If the old Egyptians

Egyptian  
and  
Chaldean  
Records

Vain  
Search  
for a  
Prehistoric  
Fiddle

<sup>1</sup> Burney, *History of Music*, vol. i. p. 204.



# Story of the Violin

and Assyrians had intended to represent a bow instrument they would hardly have left out its most essential characteristic—the bow.

Turning last to the Old Testament, it would appear from certain passages in Daniel, where the designation

**The Old Testament** “viol” occurs in connection with other instruments, that the Hebrews at those times—viz., during and after the Baby-

lonian captivity—were familiar with some kind of instrument resembling the viol of our forefathers (the immediate predecessor of the violin, as we shall see). But although this is by no means impossible, there is nothing in the original text to warrant the belief that the inspired scribes meant really an instrument played with a bow. It is more probable that the name of “viol” was applied by the translators to an instrument shaped somewhat like those mentioned above, the strings of which were twanged.

**A Misleading Translation** A curious instance in this connection is Luther’s version of the passage in Genesis iv. 21: “Jubal: he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ”

(probably pandean pipes); he translated the Hebrew text into German as: “Jubal von dem sind hergekommen die Geiger and Pfeifer,” meaning literally in English: “Jubal, from whom have come the fiddlers and pipers.” Taken unconditionally and verbally, this passage should have long satisfied the German musical historians as to the origin of the violin. Doubtless the great Reformer—himself an enthusiastic

## Origin of the Violin

and accomplished musical amateur—by adopting the names of the two prototypes of the musical profession in the Middle Ages, fiddlers and pipers, wished simply to convey the idea which is also expressed in the English version—viz., that Jubal was the father of musicians generally, or of players on string and wind instruments as typifying the highest forms of instrumental music. Nevertheless, would it really be so impossible for this or some other prehistoric Jubal to have also been the inventor of bow-instruments—the “father of fiddlers”?



## CHAPTER II.

### TRADITION AND THE SCHOLAR (AN INTERLUDE).

A certain scholar,<sup>1</sup> when he had pleaded long enough with Dame Evidence to reveal to him the origin of bow instruments without being able to make her agreeable to his wishes, cast his eyes about for that other daughter of old King Time, that fairer one, with the eyes half sphinx's and half child's, and the voice like distant waters: Tradition.

There are few countries in the world now where she may be found. Ages ago she left the once sacred valley of the Nile, from which the shades even of the gods, her former friends, had flown, and where only the pyramids rise now into a blue and cloudless sky like death's eternal exclamation signs. She also left long, long ago the desolated plains and hills which bury Babylon and Nineveh and Ur; and China she avoids for reasons of her own. But there is one land where she abides yet; and there our scholar found her in her bower of roses and immortelles.

India! Thousand-and-one-night-land of the world;

<sup>1</sup> I believe F. J. Fétis was the first who drew attention to India as the probable cradle of bow instruments, although Sonnerat's *Voyage aux Indes* may have given him the initiative.



# Tradition and the Scholar

land of fairies, land of wonders, lying in the deep, dark ocean of time like a green sunlit island; where the very air is charged with perfume and with poetry, where the trees sing, they say, and where

“Die Lotosblume ängstigt  
Sich vor der Sonne Pracht.”—HEINE.

Should India be the cradle of the violin? What did Tradition tell our scholar?

Of course she is getting so old that she sometimes forgets or mixes up things. Who would not in repeating the same stories a million times, trying each time to make them new and interesting? One must also not expect her to be too particular about details; some inaccuracies in matters of place and time, a mistake of a thousand years or so, must be taken gracefully into the bargain. She likes it best if you forget over her lovely eyes and still more lovely voice aught else.

Our scholar, knowing that, tried not to think too deeply while he sat listening at her feet.

So she told him: “Seven thousand years or so ago [he winced a little here, he couldn’t help it] there lived in the island of Ceylon, the ancient Leuka, a king. His name was Ravana. He was a great king, but he was also as great a singer and musician, for with the charm and power of his music he was even able to move the great and fearful god Siva, who loves the darkness as much as Brahma the light. This king and musician, Ravana, invented an instrument

Tradition  
repeats  
a Story  
and adds  
further  
Variations



# Story of the Violin

played with a bow which after him was called the ravanastron." Here our scholar showed surprise and wanted to interrupt, but Tradition tapped him lightly with her fan, and, smiling triumphantly though sweetly, she drew from the folds of her mantle a strange-looking object and said: "This, oh scholar, is the ravanastron, behold it well; you may hear it played by many of my humble servants in the land; seek out the  
**The** beggars and pandarons;<sup>1</sup> and now, good-bye,  
**Ravanas-**—begone." Our scholar would have liked to  
**tron** ask another question or two about that king Ravana, but he knew it was of no avail. Tradition never tells what you ask, but what she chooses. So he bowed silently and went.

In the ethnographical department at the British Museum, among the exhibits from the hill tribes of Eastern Assam, you may see an instrument which tallies exactly with the description of the ravanastron given by Fétis in his work *Stradivarius*.<sup>2</sup> A small hollow cylinder of sycamore wood, open on one side, on the other covered with a piece of boa skin (the latter forming the sound-board), is traversed by a long rod of deal—flat on top and rounded underneath—which serves as neck and finger-board, and is slightly bent towards the end where the pegs are inserted. Two strings are fastened at the lower end and stretched over a tiny bridge, which rests on the sound-board, and is cut sloping on top. A

<sup>1</sup> A kind of wandering hermit.

<sup>2</sup> *Notice of Stradivarius*, by F. J. Fétis; translated by John Bishop. London, 1864.

## Tradition and the Scholar

bow made of bamboo—the hair roughly attached on one end with a knot, on the other with rush string—completes the outfit.

It is a ravanastron there can be no doubt, although among the exhibits it figures simply under the name of “fiddle and bow.”



## CHAPTER III.

### A FAMILY LIKENESS.

IN India then is found to the present day a something in the shape of a bow instrument which might possibly be the lowly grandsire of the king of instruments. It would not be the first time that the most humble attained eventually to the most exalted position, though in this case it requires some credulity—or, let us say, some ready fancy to discover even a faint relation between a modern violin and this extremely primitive and miserable-looking affair, the ravanastron. Yet both share the one feature which distinguishes them from all other instruments of the ancients, as far as we can judge of them—viz., the bow. That wonderful contrivance, that right hand of the fiddle, without which even a “Strad.” is all but useless, for which we have vainly looked on Grecian, Egyptian, and Chaldean bas-reliefs, here, in India, we find it. It is the unmistakable family likeness which links together the old and the new, the crude and the perfect, the ravanastron and the sovereign Strad.

Let us now look a little more closely into the claim of this supposed ancestor of bow instruments.



## Family Likeness

Some musical historians have rejected it on the ground that the instrument in question was not proved to be of ancient origin—that is, primitive in the true sense—nor is the existence of primitive instruments of the bowed kind confined to-day to India. Many Asiatic and East European tribes use similar musical contrivances, and might perhaps with equal right claim for them originality and antiquity.

Some  
Historians'  
Objections

Tradition in Eastern countries is a factor to be reckoned with to an extent of which Western people have hardly any conception. In the West, change, constant, relentless, uncompromising change, is the watchword; change which destroys to-day what men kept holy yesterday: in the East it is stability which cherishes the old more than the new. In many instances tradition is the one only link which binds the past to the present, taking the place of all other records. In India it is, as it were, the sap which runs through the whole tree of national life, from the roots deeply bedded in the soil of antiquity, up into every branch of the broad and lofty crown; a living thing therefore, and not, as with us, a dead weight which one or two generations shoulder patiently and a third throws off never to pick up again.

Tradition  
and Con-  
servatism  
in Eastern  
Countries

In a country, then, where not only the ground is tilled and corn is thrashed and bread baked in exactly the same fashion as 2000 or 3000 years ago, but where also a tale, a poem, a prayer, a melody will



# Story of the Violin

live orally among the people for untold generations without losing much of its original characteristics—in such a country an instrument like the ravanastron, which, tradition says, was invented very long ago, would, under certain conditions, stand the same chance of retaining its original primitive identity to the present day. At the same time, other instruments of the same kind may have been developed out of the original one and taken their place beside it in the affections of the people, or have driven it gradually into an inferior position.

There are many instruments of the bowed kind in India to-day which show a great advance on the ravanastron. Some of these, **Other Bowed Instruments in India** no doubt, are importations,<sup>1</sup> but others are not, and may have existed for ages side by side with their more primitive ancestor or elder brother (see Fig. 1).

Granted, then, that this ravanastron of the Indian beggar and pandarons of to-day may be the ravanastron of long ago, the next question would be, how

<sup>1</sup> The influence of Arabia and Mohammedanism generally, which is so evident everywhere in India, has been urged as a proof in support of the theory that India received all or most of her bow instruments from West Asiatic and North-East African nations on the occasions of the Mussulman conquests in India in the seventh century of our era; but that such is not the case can be demonstrated by the structural peculiarities of some of the Hindoo instruments. Besides, tradition receives here the corroborating testimony of certain Sanscrit allusions to the fiddle-bow, dating from a time long prior to the conquest of India by Mohammedans.



## Family Likeness

long ago, or who could have been this Ravana, King of Leuka?

Tradition says, five thousand years before our era he invented his instrument. This is a startlingly long time. Even if we were disposed to discount a liberal portion as compound interest on a small initial mistake made in the counting by the descendants of this Ceylonian king, it would launch us into the dimmest dim of prehistoric times—as regards India at least. Unlike her two great sister nations in antiquity, Egypt

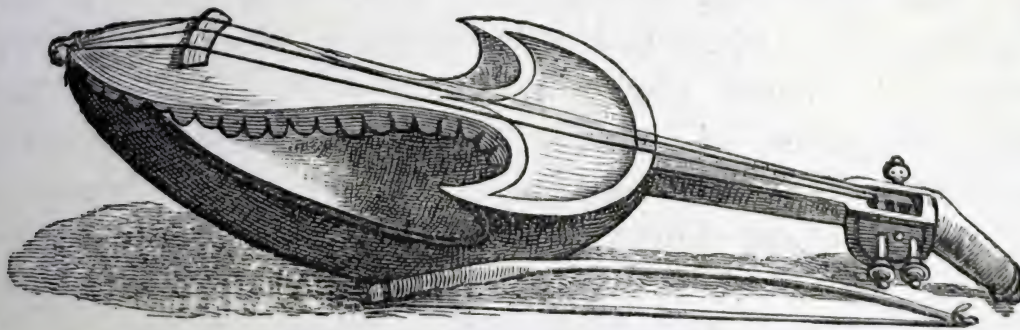


FIG. 1.—INDIAN SARINDA.

and Chaldea (which had then already raised and buried several civilisations), India has no documentary record of herself as a nation prior to about 2000 B.C., when the hymns of the Rig Veda, the oldest of the four sacred books of the Brahmins, are supposed to have been composed. To speculate, therefore, on a king who lived, say, some three thousand years before Christ, not to mention such a period as five thousand years, would seem useless labour.

It appears to me significant, however, that tradition



# Story of the Violin

should have made this Ravana a King of Ceylon.<sup>1</sup> Now, it is well known that the Hindoo nation came ages ago from the country lying between Persia and the Indus, south of the province of Bactria, and occupied for an indefinitely long time the region south of the Himalayas, which to this day is called the Punjab. When grown in size too large to be accommodated there, they spread farther east and south to the Ganges and beyond, pressing on and conquering the aboriginal tribes which opposed their onward march.

From these facts it would appear that this King Ravana was not of Hindoo origin at all, but belonged to some aboriginal people, the history and even memory of which is buried in antediluvian mystery. Perhaps he was of Sumerian or Accadian descent, hailing from that supposed first cradle of the human race, the fertile valley of the Euphrates; or from the Asiatic high plains which lie north-east of it.<sup>2</sup> Or why not go still a step farther with the hand of fancy, and see in him (Ravana) the very Jubal of the Bible, the father of musicians, the inventor of string and wind instruments, whom tradition in the course of ages has transformed—name and all—first into a mythical personage, a demi-god, and then into a king?<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> So many ancient myths and traditions point to an insular origin of heroes, gods, lawgivers, etc.

<sup>2</sup> The Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea surely served at an early period as a medium of immigration.

<sup>3</sup> It is well known how many Eastern myths attribute the origin of music and musical instruments to superhuman agencies. The stories of



## Family Likeness

Nay—who knows?—perhaps the mean-looking ravanastron is but the degenerate descendant from instruments too far from us removed in time to even think out; a piece of antediluvian wreckage which slipped out of the arms of oblivion; a fragment of earliest civilisations; a lost ray from the dawn of the world when man yet walked with God.

Enough, when the Hindoos occupied India and brought with them the vina, their national favourite instrument (which tradition also says they received from Nared, the son of Saraswinta, Brahma's wife), it would not be unreasonable to suppose that the ravanastron and its brothers of the bowed kind (if there were any then) had to take a second place as a legacy of a conquered and despised people. Eventually it sunk still further in the esteem of a victorious race until it became relegated to the hut of the lowly and poor in the land, who alone kept up its use and kingly memories. So much of speculation on this supposed inventor of the ravanastron. Be its story and age now what it may, it is certainly a very primitive invention, and as a musical instrument would hardly deserve the attention it gets from the musical

the Chinese Emperor Fuhí, of the Egyptian god Thoth, and the Apollo of the Greeks, etc., what are they but variations of the same thought?—music leaving its eternal abode in heaven, and descending to earth through the instrumentality of gods and super-men. A strange coincidence, by the way, this mythical high birth of our art, with the biblical testimony to the high birth of man—which our materialists are trying their best to gainsay.



## Story of the Violin

historian but for that one feature of it, the bow. It is the bow first and the bow last, as every violinist knows; and yet the bow even—that magic wand in the hand of a Paganini which opens wondrous worlds of sound—how easy an invention it really seems here, in its first crude form: the simple principle of producing sounds from strings by friction, that is all. What could be more natural than that the same bow, which men learned almost from the first to employ as a means of subsistence and as a weapon, nay, from which he

probably derived the design for his first harp—should have by accident or reflection revealed to him the possibility of sounding strings otherwise than by picking with the fingers or a plectrum.<sup>1</sup> But that brings us to the interesting question: Have really no nations of antiquity, other than the Hindoos, known bowed instruments? This seems hardly possible.

<sup>1</sup> A small piece of horn or bone with which to pick the strings.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE OLD NATIONS.

CONSIDER other nations—the Egyptians, who built up their marvellous civilisation seemingly independent of outside influence; or the Greeks, who to a large extent focussed the achievements of older civilisations, and reflected them through the bright mirror of their own national individuality—does it seem credible that they should not have found out even the principle of friction of the string for themselves, or that it should not have been transmitted to them somehow or other, at some time or other, from the country where it was known?

India, after she had once, against her will, entered the ring of historical nations, was involved in many wars. Assyrians (already 1200 B.C.), Persians, Greeks conquered her and enriched themselves with her treasures. She entertained commercial relations with other parts—Phœnicia, Arabia—and was still more sought by them as a kind of earthly paradise and wonderland. Should not also the knowledge of the bow, or bowed instruments, have found its way across her borders? Surely. Here, in our opinion, seems to lie the real reason for the absence of all historical proofs



# Story of the Violin

proof of their existence. Did such instruments, when invented by or imported to other nations, find a sympathetic echo in the musical soul of those nations: were they popular and a success?

If we look about among the nations of that ancient world, what do we find? Take the old Assyrians and Chaldeans. From what our scientists tell us about them, they must have been in general a practical, industrious, and ambitious people. And their music? Doubtless music was held in great esteem, but it appears to have been largely in the hands of the upper classes. It was the aristocrats of Babylon some 5000 years ago who, with much ceremony and display, went, to the rhythm and tune of musical instruments, to the temples of their national gods to worship. They played themselves; no hired bands then. We see on Assyrian bas-reliefs men and women carrying harps, lyres, psalteries; and from the cut of their clothes and the embroidery, etc., displayed on them, our learned Assyriologists have drawn the above ingenious conclusions as to the social rank of these musicians. Imagine such an Assyrian gentleman making a public spectacle of himself with a sort of ravanastron and bow in his hands, trying to play it while he walked in a solemn procession. Why, the idea would have been preposterous. As for the populace, if we may draw conclusions from their national characteristics, they would have preferred the shrill tones of a clarionet or flute, a drum, a tambourine, or some twanged instruments, to the



## Old Nations

thin and unexciting, plaintive sounds of a bowed instrument.

In Egypt, again, music lay mostly in the hands of women of the upper classes, and this fact almost speaks for itself. Considering what in our own days even old Spohr thought of women playing the violin, there was no room in Egyptian parlours for a ravanastron or omerti. A harp or a lyre was a different thing. Not only was its use sanctioned by religious tradition from time immemorial, but the way of handling it was natural, graceful, inviting to the Egyptian maiden. It could be played in walking, standing, or lounging, and pretty hands and rings and rounded arms could be displayed (and when did woman ever despise such means of attraction?). Lastly and above all, the bright, tinkling tones of their twanged instruments suited admirably the ears and musical tastes of these bright, light-hearted Southerners, just as they do yet in most Oriental countries.

Instruments  
sanctioned  
by  
Religious  
Tradition  
in Egypt

It is first and last the idiosyncrasies of a people, nurtured by custom and tradition, which will give the direction to its musical activities. How much had religious sanction to do with the employment of musical instruments in those ancient days? Music and religion were inseparable. We find the proof of that in the records of all ancient nations. Every instrument which was not conformable, assimilable to the cult, not sanctioned by tradition, had to be rejected, cast out sooner or later. What place could a primitive bowed instru-



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ment have found in the Egyptian or Assyrian temples, in the divine, symbolic services of the Hebrews or the Greek Hellenic and Corinthian plays?

If, then, bowed instruments were altogether heterogeneous to the idiosyncrasies of some nations, were not to be infused into their national, social, and religious life, but held in contempt or aversion, can we expect that their sculptors and artists should have wished to perpetuate their memory and use in works of art? The answer is obvious. Turning to India with this idea before us, it may become clear why bowed instruments should have found here an abiding home at least, if not an exalted position like the vina.

## CHAPTER V.

### A WANDERING.

IN India it seems music was never confined to one class or caste in particular; it permeated the whole social body, from the priests, who claimed to have received it from the gods, down to the miserable, half-naked outcast of society. Add to this condition, which must have been conducive to the spreading of the divine art in every conceivable form, a highly sensitive and naturally poetical disposition of the people, an inclination also to immaterialise, or spiritualise life, and a profound reverence for the old, the traditional, and the necessary elements for the existence of the ravanastron and its like in earliest times was given. It was, as it is yet, the instrument of the dreamer, the mystic, the poet, the wandering hermit, and the Buddhist monk; the dejected beggar, who to its soft, unpretentious tones, could pour out his supplications and prayers.

Speaking from personal knowledge, I may add that the tone of this ravanastron is by no means so bad as the miserable outward appearance of the instrument would lead one to suppose. It is soft, thin (a little muffled, as if muted), ethereal, suggestive, if you will, of thought

Tone of the  
Ravan-  
astron



# Story of the Violin

rather than emotion; or be it purified emotion, such as the pious Hindoo might feel when he sees the sun rise over the sacred waters of the Ganges? It is not a tone which, with voluptuous ring, will hold back the thought in its flight to Nirvana,<sup>1</sup> back to this lovely, wicked earth, but rather one which gives it wings to get away. You cannot play Paganini's "Witches' Dance" on it, or even



FIG. 2.—OMERTI.

"Home, Sweet Home"; but you can sing within your soul to its accompaniment, and your lips can mutter prayers while you draw the artless bow over its two or three low-tuned strings. Therefore also your Hindoo beggar (and philosopher) loves it, and he will love it in spite of your Cremonas, which since have found their way out to him and challenged comparison with it. He will love his ravanastron, his sarinda, his omerti (see Fig. 2), when our own admired violin may be forgotten.<sup>2</sup>

Hindoos' Love for it

Although to India may justly belong the distinction of having given birth to bowed instruments, and to have sheltered and cherished them in their prehistoric childhood when other greater nations closed their doors against them, or de-

<sup>1</sup> See Sir William Jones, *On the Music of the Hindoos*.

<sup>2</sup> For particulars on Indian and other Oriental bowed instruments, their construction, etc., see Carl Engel's *Researches into the Early History of the Violin Family*.



## A Wandering

spised and suppressed them, we are hardly so much indebted to her for their manifold improvements and their ultimate appearance in Western Europe as to two other ancient nations: the Persians and the Arabs. The Persians, it seems, were a brother race of the old Aryans or Hindoos, both living amicably together west of the Indus, until for some reason or other (probably overpopulation) they separated—one nation, the Hindoos, going east and south; the other, the Persians—and probably most of the present European nations—going west or staying (Persians) where they were. The Persians, then, related to the Hindoos by blood and language, features and white skin, although they subsequently conquered and oppressed their old allies, must have loved music with a similar great fondness.

Indebted  
to the  
Persians  
and Arabs

While India was like a shy, beautiful maiden, who liked to hide her beauty and her blushes before strangers and stay at home—and her music with her, Persia was a strong young eagle, a warrior who went abroad and got into fights with other nations, and was as often beaten as

Music with  
the Sword

he emerged conqueror. But he carried music along with the sword, and music benefited in the change and turmoil of the camp. It is to Persia, therefore, that most of the improvements and the spreading of music in ancient times are due, and some little share of this Persian care for music and musical instruments fell doubtless also to bowed instruments.

Improve-  
ments and  
Spreading  
of Music



# Story of the Violin

Now, when our ugly old friends the ravanastrons and sarindas, etc., and their crude companion, the bow, began their wanderings, and how they—after many vicissitudes and much altered—found their weary way along the winding path of time, through Persia to Arabia, until the musical historian sights them through his telescope and pilots them safely farther, we cannot tell; but there is little doubt that a certain bowed instrument, the rebab, ultimately migrated from Persia and Arabia into South-western Europe on its way to kingship and to glory.

To sum up once more : in whatever light we try to view the subject of the origin and early history of the violin family, we cannot see clearly. It is like standing on a high mount trying to distinguish objects in the valleys and plains below over which evening has already rolled the thick white feather-beds for the night. Here and there a glimpse through the fog—a lighted window far, far away, where Tradition sits spinning her eternal threads, and that is all.

## CHAPTER VI.

### MUSIC IN GENERAL IN THE FIRST CENTURIES A.D.

MUSIC had shared in the general quickening of life which followed the establishment of Christ's kingdom on earth. It was, shall we say, the first fair flower of the spirit pushing its way through yet wintry darkness to proclaim to the world the new spring; the *primula veris* blooming by the open grave of a doomed and dying pagan civilisation. Kiesewetter, in his *History of European Music*, tells how this new Christian music (if so it may be called even in its primitive beginnings) was born unnoticed in huts and out-of-the-way places, in caves and catacombs where early Christians were assembled. They were but poor and simple folk for the most part, who knew nothing of a Greek music system, enharmonic and chromatic. Their hearts were full of hope and joy, and when a heart is so full that it cannot contain its fulness any longer, it flows over in tears or in melodies, this is the beginning of all true music.

The early Christians sang. May be it was at first only a simple *la la* of the soul, joined to a psalm, a prayer, or an Alleluia, Amen; extemporaneous, with-

The first  
Fair  
Flower of  
the Spirit

Primitive  
Beginnings



# Story of the Violin

out time, and without form and rule; a rising and falling of the voices (unison) to the rhythm of the syllables, as the bird swings on his branch to the rhythm of the breeze. But gradually certain accents, certain turns and cadences were retained, and through frequent repetitions these primitive melodies became fixed in the Christian communities, and were handed down to succeeding generations.

**The Early Christians Sang** In the third and fourth centuries, when the spreading of the Christian faith had made mere oral transmission of the melodies more and more impossible, and yet the necessity of uniformity in the singing only more urgent in proportion, some learned and able bishops like Ambrosius (333-397) began to collect and sift the scattered material and, with some knowledge of the ancient Greek systems, commit it to writing. Still later, Gregory the Great gave it its final shape in the modes and chants which ever since have been identified with his name and church music generally, and which lie at the root of our glorious modern musical art.

**The First Singing School** The same great Pope also established in Rome the first singing school,<sup>1</sup> where talented boys were instructed by an acknowledged master. From it eventually sprang similar institutions in other Christian lands, able teachers having been sent there from Rome to pro-

<sup>1</sup> Some writers put the foundation of the first singing school in Rome at an earlier date.



## Music in the First Centuries A.D.

pagate under Rome's auspices the only true and perfect art of Christian singing. At the same time, in the seclusion of the newly-founded cloisters, men began to wrestle with the theoretical problems of the new art—viz., to lay the foundations of polyphonic writing, that pearl of great price for which they had vainly searched in the musical legacy of the Greeks.

But while thus it fared comparatively well with singing and musical theory—both lying at the warm bosom of a Church which, in times, convulsed with changes, stood firm and grew ever more powerful—

instrumental music — poor Cinderella! — A Poor Cinderella was not so fortunate. The very fact that

almost nothing is known about her in the early centuries of the Christian era, and very little in succeeding ones, is proof of her miserable condition compared to that of her two sisters of the art. Did instruments exist? Of course, Greek and Roman instruments endured well into the later Middle Ages. The new Christian art, however, being essentially vocal in its nature and import—while we may presume that this or that Biblical instrument like the harp, the psalter, etc., continued an honourable existence, if not in connection with religious ceremonies, at least in the better Christian homes<sup>1</sup>—the majority of instruments, those former companions at pagan feasts and revelries, were very likely shunned at first by the Christians, and then gradually

<sup>1</sup> We must also mention the organ, which from the ninth century was employed in the churches to accompany the singing, and the monochord, which served for teaching purposes.



## Story of the Violin

by the irresistible centrifugal force of prejudicial Church influence driven, together with the instrumentalists, to the periphery of social life. Here lived, and indeed was very much alive, the large community of gladiators, histrions, jongleurs, buffoons, **Gladiators,** showmen, rope-walkers, dancers, and all **Histrions,** such as catered to man's worldly lusts and **and** appetites, and fed on the rough lawlessness **Jongleurs** of the times. They were a remnant of ancient Roman corporations, swelled by new promiscuous elements: a motley, homeless, wretched crowd of semi-vagabonds, who had preserved their identity through centuries of barbarian invasions and devastations, and carried it from their former haunts of the devil, Rome, into the Roman provinces and among barbarian tribes. First in Gaul and Spain, they gradually spread north and east and west, beyond the Danube and the Rhine, and many a little band may have, on Norman vessels, reached the British Isles long before King Alfred went as minstrel<sup>1</sup> to the Danes. Cursed by the Church, despised and loathed and feared, and yet the not unwelcome guests at many a pagan and Christian court or camp, with the great and small, with good and bad, they roamed about the land in large and in small bands, with women, children, dogs, and carts, in search of a hard-earned livelihood. There was nothing in the way of cheap amusement that these Barnums of the road

<sup>1</sup> The designation minstrel in this connection is to be understood as singer or bard, a class quite distinct from the one here referred to.

## Music in the First Centuries A.D.

had not among their stock-in-trade, from a punch-and-judy show, a monkey, trained dogs, bears, and pigs, to a pretty woman from the East who knew how to paint her face and roll her eyes and throw her limbs about to the wild rhythm of a Roman bacchanal. To attract attention, to amuse at any price was the first consideration; music, such as it was, was only an accessory. In this worst of company we shall next meet the ancestor of our violin.



## CHAPTER VII.

### FIRST BOWED INSTRUMENTS IN EUROPE.

WE left the rebab and its bow (presumably) in keeping of the Persian and the Arab.

It is a matter of general history how, in the year 622 A.D., the Arab turned Mohammedan and conqueror of the faith; how he carried his victorious arms from Syria to India; and how presently (711 A.D.) a mighty cloud of dark-skinned fanatics rolled over Egypt into Spain, threatening to bury Western Europe and a young Christianity. The danger was averted by the timely victory of Carl Martell,<sup>1</sup> and only in Spain the Moors retained a hold for several centuries more. But it is interesting in connection with our subject that very soon after this historical event, the Mussulman conquest of Spain (or rather, after Abderrahman, driven from Persia, founded, in 756, the Caliphate of Cordova in Spain), bow instruments appear for the first time in Spain and Southern Europe, and musical historians have from this fact drawn the not illogical conclusion that that modest escutcheon of peace, the fiddle-bow, came to us from its Eastern home on the wings of war

Rebab  
enters  
Spain

<sup>1</sup> Battle of Tours and Poitiers, 732 A.D.

# First Bowed Instruments in Europe

What was the first European rebab like? We do not know exactly; but the Arabs to this day use an instrument played with a bow which they call rebab<sup>1</sup> (see Figs. 3, 4). It is pear-shaped, has

sometimes  
Arabian tuned in  
and and is often  
European carved and  
Rebabs with two half-

moon shaped sound-  
holes in the belly. A  
similar instrument prob-  
ably served as the pat-  
tern for the instrument  
or instruments which  
all through the Middle  
Ages figured in Europe  
under the names of—  
rubèbe, rabel, rebec,  
and gigue in French;  
robel, robis, and arrabis  
in Portuguese; rubeba,  
rebeba, rebecca in

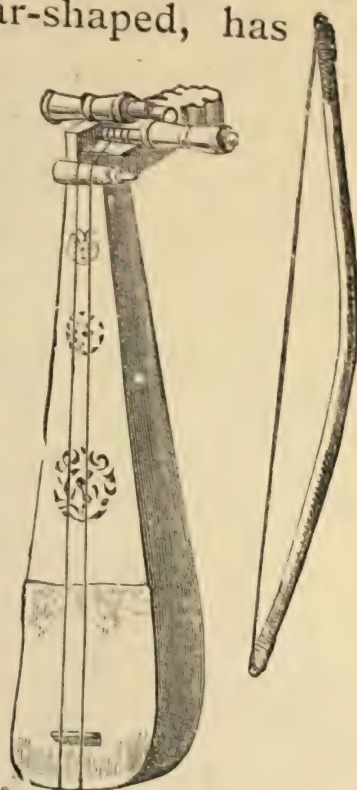


FIG. 3.

two and  
three strings  
fourths,  
elaborately  
ornamented



FIG. 4.

REBAB AND KEMANGEH (ALSO SOMETIMES  
CALLED A REBAB).

From the descriptive catalogue, South  
Kensington Museum.

<sup>1</sup> A name probably derived from the Persian *revahva*—that is, emitting melancholy sounds; see Carl Engel's *Researches into the Early History of the Violin Family*. This author is of the opinion that the Arabs received the instrument from the Persians at the time of the conquest of Persia, because music there was then in a higher state of cultivation than with the Arabs; but this fact alone would hardly warrant the assumption that the rebab became only then known to the Arabs.



# Story of the Violin

Italian; rebec, rebelani, and Geige ohne Bündel<sup>1</sup> (without frets) in German; and rubible, rebec, and also crowd in English. The latter designation suggests rather forcibly the Welsh crwth, an instrument of which I shall speak presently.

The oldest representation of such a transplanted re-bab was extracted by the Abbot Martin Gerbert<sup>2</sup> from a manuscript dating from the beginning of the ninth cen-



FIG. 5.—REBAB ESH-SHA'ER (POET-FIDDLE).

Used in the coffee-houses of Cairo to accompany recitations; after each verse the poet-musician plays a little interlude. (See Engel's descriptive catalogue.)

tury. Comparing it (Fig. 6) with the Arabian

prototype (Fig. 3) the family likeness (apart from the bow) is unmistakable, although it

is called by Gerbert "lira." At the same time, its form resembles

somewhat the ancient chelis (a small variety of the lute), a fact which is not surprising when it is re-

The oldest European Representative

The Family Likeness

<sup>1</sup> *Geige* and *gigue* mean evidently the same instrument, both words being probably derived from the French *gigot*=leg of mutton (on account of the similarity of the form). See Ruehlmann: *Geschichte der Bogen-instrumente*; Brunswick, 1882.

<sup>2</sup> *De Cantu et Musica Sacra*; pub. 1774.



# First Bowed Instruments in Europe

membered that some little time must have elapsed between the presumed first introduction of the rebab and the above-mentioned representation given by Martin Gerbert in his *De Cantu et Musica*. New surroundings, circumstances existing forms of instruments, sire for greater practicability, for more graceful form, must wrought changes from the that eventually led to the final which we mostly find the rebec succeeding centuries.<sup>1</sup> From that we have any record bèbe or rebec and all through the Middle Ages the bow appears as part and parcel of the instru-

(other pre- and the de- a handier, needs have original shape in depicted in the first of the ru-

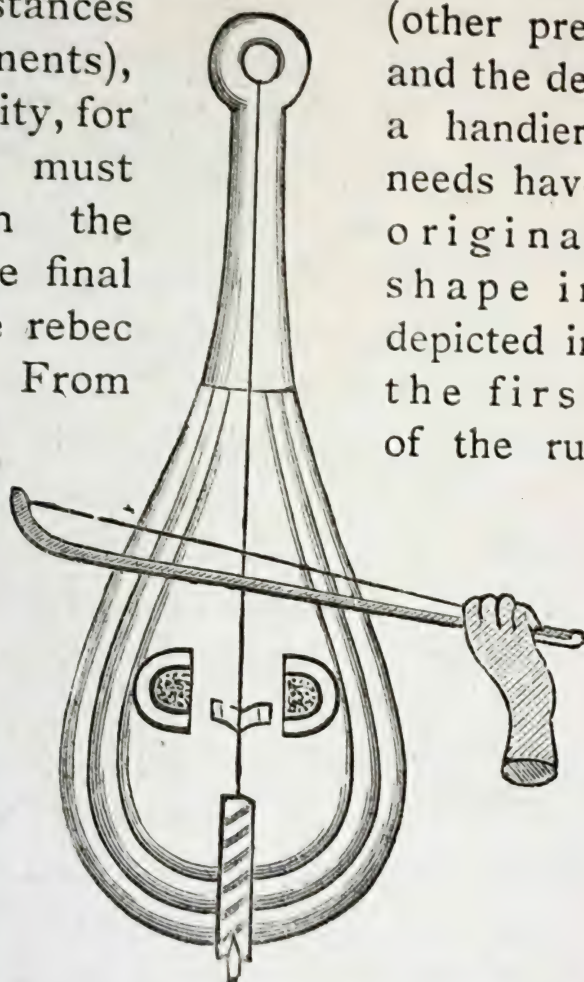


FIG. 6.—EARLIEST REPRESENTATION OF A EUROPEAN FIDDLE.

<sup>1</sup> As to the one string on Gerbert's rubèbe compared to the two on the ordinary Arabian rebab, it is explainable one way or another. Branzoli in his *Manuale Storico del Violinista* speaks of a species of Oriental rebab which has only one string; moreover, there is another bowed

instrument known in Egypt as Rebab esh-Sha'er (Fig. 5) which has only one string, and is used like a 'cello, with an iron foot stuck in the ground. It is possible that the European cousin-ancestor began with one string, and more were added as circumstances called for them. On representations of rebecs in later centuries we invariably find two, and often three strings.



# Story of the Violin

ment. It is never absent; and this is of some significance, as we shall have occasion to observe.

Although this Eastern importation is the one oldest European representative of the violin family of which we possess documentary proof, it is by no

The  
Welsh  
Crwth

means certain that it really and absolutely was the oldest. Not a few historians, indeed, are inclined to bestow this honour (of *ancienité*) on an instrument nearer home—viz., the Welsh *crwth*. Some readers will no doubt know from

illustrations or descriptions this quaint instrument, now fallen into disuse and found only here and there in collections of curios, but still in use among Welsh bards as late as 1776, when—according to unimpeachable testimony<sup>1</sup>—a certain bard, John Morgan, on the Isle of Anglesey, was able to evoke from it its now forgotten mysteries of sound. Its claim for being the oldest bow-

Its Claims  
Discussed

instrument in Europe rests chiefly on the interpretation of two lines of an elegiac Latin poem of one Venantius Fortunatus, Bishop of Poitiers, who lived between 560 and 609 A.D., thus more than a century prior to the alleged introduction of the Arabian *rebab*. The verse reads:

“Romanusque lyra plaudat, tibi Barbarus harpa,  
Græcus achilliaca, chrotta Brittanna canat.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Archæologia; or, Miscellaneous Tracts relating to Antiquity*, vol. iii., with a description by Daines Barrington.

<sup>2</sup> Translated: Let the Romans applaud thee with the lyre, the Barbarian with the harp, the Greek with the cithara; let the British *crwth* sing.



# First Bowed Instruments in Europe

The crotta here referred to is supposed to be the ancestral Welsh *crwth*, and the word "*canat*" to imply that it was an instrument capable of producing a "singing tone," or, in other words, an instrument played with a bow. In opposition stand the opinions of Carl Engel, the late eminent musical antiquarian and scholar, and others, who see in the original Welsh *crwth* not a bowed instrument at all, but simply one closely resembling the small Greek lyre, the strings of which were twanged, and to which in course of time, when foreigners had acquainted the Welsh players with the fiddle-bow, the latter was applied. In consequence, the instrument assumed some features agreeable to the use of the new contrivance while still on the whole the earlier form was retained. Thus, on the *crwth* of the eighteenth century—of which alone we possess illustrations representing the instrument in its last improved stage—are yet found

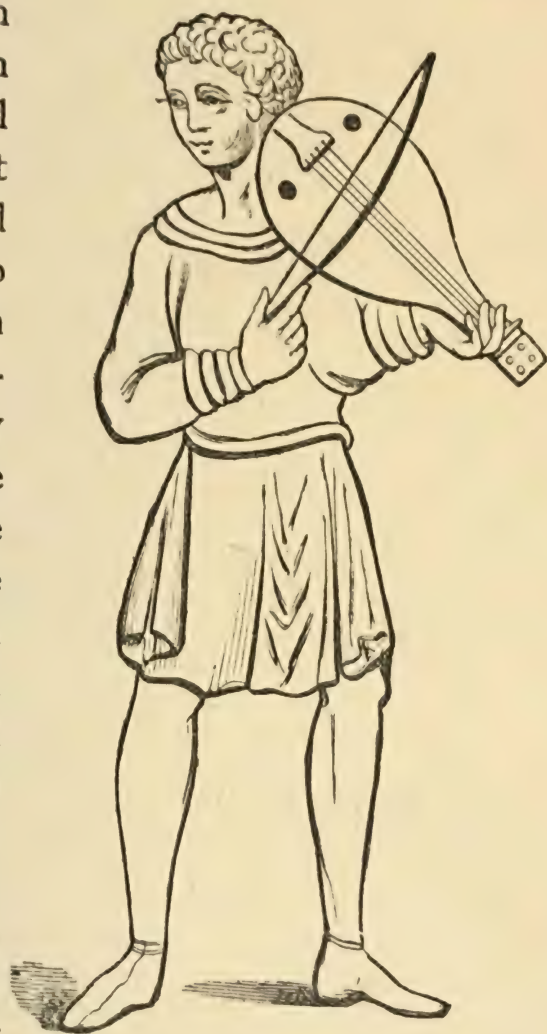


FIG. 7.—ANGLO-SAXON FIDDLER.



# Story of the Violin

four strings played with the bow, while two others, lying lower beside the bridge, were twanged with the thumb of the left hand. For details of Carl Engel's argument in support of his opinion, we refer the reader to that author's admirable treatise on the crwth.<sup>1</sup> The perusal hardly leaves room for any



FIG. 8.—THREE-STRINGED CRWTH.

other than the author's conviction, and seems almost the last word that can possibly be said on the subject—be this in relation to the structural peculiarities of the instrument, which point unmistakably to the lyre; or the origin of the word crwth;<sup>2</sup> or the established fact that the Anglo-Saxons (Fig. 7) were acquainted with and left records of the fiddle (rebec or crowd) long before the Welsh bards. Nevertheless, there is this verse by Fortunatus. Its significance cannot be denied. And there is also that well-known illustration of a three-stringed instrument—evidently a crwth—

taken from a manuscript which formerly belonged to the Abbey St. Martial de Limoge (now in the Paris National Library), and dating from the eleventh century

<sup>1</sup> Carl Engel : *Researches into the Early History of the Violin Family*, chap. ii.

<sup>2</sup> Interesting is Fétis's opinion ; see this author's *Stradivari*.



# First Bowed Instruments in Europe

(see Fig. 8). There is further a quaint allusion to the crwth (dating from the beginning of the tenth century) quoted by Vidal,<sup>1</sup> which points directly to an instrument original with the bards and different from harp and pibroch, though not necessarily one of the bowed kind. In short, since the key to unlock the dark chambers of the prehistoric past of these British Isles and Northern Europe is once for all lost, and we can only form more or less conjectural ideas by peeps through the keyhole, as it were, these upholders of the crwth theory have no particular reason to give up their opinion.

<sup>1</sup> Vidal : *Les Instruments à Archet* (vol. i.; Paris, 1876-77); under "Deuxième période du vi.-xvie. siècle."



## CHAPTER VIII.

### A MEETING.

THUS the rebab and its bow had been brought to Europe. As we said it fell on evil times as regards instrumental music generally, there was nothing left for it but to make its home with the homeless, among the outcasts of society, with the "fahrende Leute," as they were called in Germany: the clown, the punch-and-judy man, the wandering minstrel and musician. How did it find its way to him?

It would be surprising if a novelty, an object of curiosity, like this Eastern emigrant—which perhaps a bronze-faced Moor had first displayed before a chance audience at a street corner in Valladolid or Cordova—should not have attracted sooner or later the attention of the wayfaring man who went everywhere. With an eye for business he took possession of it at once. In its primitive, native form it cannot have required any particular skill or practice. It was just the thing he needed, a capital addition to his amusement *répertoire*. How the Goth and Frank would open their eyes wide at its strange weird tones! how very good also for training dogs and sustaining the rhythm for the heavy legs of dancing Master Bruin! From hence-



## A Meeting

forth the future of the Eastern guest in Europe was assured—be it that it began at the very bottom of the social ladder.

For two whole centuries—that is, from the beginning of the ninth to well into the middle of the eleventh century—it must have been identified with the darkest period in the career of the wandering minstrel; if indeed we may already call the poor wretch so who, for mere dear life's sake, had to be half-a-dozen things in one: fiddler as well as clown, dancer, singer, actor, and Heaven knows what else.

Dark  
Period  
for Two  
Centuries

After the middle and towards the end of the eleventh century, when Western Europe was nearing the great romantic movement associated with the troubadours and minnesänger, we meet first on monuments and in the annals of the times another kind of bow instrument. It is not, like the rebab, pear-shaped with bulging back; it resembles the form of the guitar. It has a sonorous chest, consisting of a back and a belly and sides or ribs connecting them, it has (more or less accentuated) curvatures or embouchures at the sides such as were noticeable on the illustration of the crwth of the eleventh century. In short, adding to these features the bow, there is no mistaking this new instrument for anything else than a predecessor of the viol. With the rebab it shares sometimes the Oriental shape of the sound-holes (a C or half-moon), which suggest a possible Eastern origin, or at least a

A New  
Kind of  
Bowed  
Instrument  
appears



# Story of the Violin



FIG. 9.—MEDIÆVAL ORCHESTRA, ELEVENTH CENTURY.  
Bas-relief, Abbey of St. Georges de Boscherville, Normandy.

sojourn in Oriental countries. When and how it came to Europe, whether before or after the introduction of the rebab, we do not know. Some features point to a relation to the Indian saranguy, a supposed Possibly a cousin of the omerti and sarinda, and descendant of the ravanastron; and it is just of the possible that two branches of the same Ravan- family of Indian bowed instruments existed astron and developed simultaneously and yet apart from each other in the course of ages, until they met in the camp of the wandering minstrel. It is also possible that its history and relation lay in quite another direction—viz., that it was originally some Asiatic, Persian, Hebrew, Arabic (or Greek, if you will) twanged instrument which found its way into Western Europe during the great migration of the people, for all we know, in the track of the Huns



# The Fiddle-bow



FIG. 9.—MEDIÆVAL ORCHESTRA, ELEVENTH CENTURY.

Bas-relief, Abbey of St. Georges de Boscherville, Normandy. (Descriptive Catalogue, South Kensington Museum.)

who invaded Europe in A.D. 375, and for nearly a century occupied quarters in Hungary under King Attila, the Etzel of the Nibelungenlied. That we have no illustrated record of it prior to the eleventh century (see Fig. 9) is no proof that it did not exist in Europe long before that time.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps on its way about as twanged nondescript it had met the Greek lyre and taken some points from it for the improvement of its form; or exchanged courtesies with the monochord, with the result of securing for itself a bridge and a real finger-board—until, one fine day, somewhere, somehow, it was introduced by the notorious “spielman” to the fiddle-bow, and its fate was sealed.

No  
Previous  
Record

Introduced  
to the Bow

<sup>1</sup> The Benedictine monk, Otfried (780-875), mentions the Fidula in his *Liber Evangeliorum* as one of two bowed instruments then in existence.



# Story of the Violin

This new instrument, when we get sight of it on monuments, went in Germany under the name of Fiedel or Vedel.<sup>1</sup>

From a reference in the famous "Nibelungenlied" to Volker, the spielman who is called "spanhen videlaer,"<sup>2</sup> it would almost appear as if this fiedel or predecessor of the viol was first known in parts of Middle and Eastern Europe before it became popular in the South. For, although this great national Teutonic poem was composed, or rather compiled, in the twelfth century, and is largely a product of fiction, its main contents, wondrously woven of history and myth, had probably been simmering in the minds of the people and been narrated and sung by the bards and minstrels for centuries before.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the striking resemblance which the earliest representations of the fiedel show with the gaudock of the Russian peasantry and a sort of fiddle yet in use in parts of Norway and Iceland (where it is called "fidla") lend additional strength to the conjecture that the fiedel made its way from the East and North to the South, while the rebab (or rather the rebec, gigue, geige) spread from the South and Southwest to the North—both through the instrumentality of

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> The fine fiedel or fiddle-player "who wielded a fiddle-bow—broad and long like a sword."

<sup>3</sup> It is known that Charlemagne collected much of the old folk-lore which was scattered among conquered heathen nations. Unfortunately, his bigoted son ordered these treasures to be burned, and it is not impossible that an early version of the "Nibelungenlied," or saga, shared the same fate.



## Fiedel or Vedel

those great cosmopolitan tramps, the Spielleute. At all events, from the end of the eleventh century on both kinds of bowed instruments, the fiedel or early viol varieties (with sides and embouchures), and the rebec or gigue kind (without either), appear in company of the wandering musician, who therefore next claims our attention.



## CHAPTER IX.

### THE MINSTREL AND MUSICIAN IN THE ROMANTIC AGE.

TIMES had improved. Aside from the general missionary work of the Church, the successive reigns of Charlemagne, the Carlovingians (843-911), and Salic kings (919-1024) had left their marks on the political face of continental Europe. Strong rule had brought greater safety to the ruled; safety had brought stability, and stability order; and with order came those other gentler forces or influences: better manners, better tastes, etc., working on and slowly transforming the minds of the people. Instrumental music, such as it was apart from the Church, surely profited too in a modest way. It is probable that the better class of wandering musicians had then already begun to separate from the worst, lowest, and roughest elements of the wayfaring people with which they had been hitherto indissolubly associated. While in a former age of violence, insecurity, and barbaric taste, they would have jeopardised their existence if cast adrift from their viler companions on the road, they could afford now, in some cases at least, to strike out for themselves. At any rate instrumentalists of all kinds, and fiddlers



# Romantic Age

in particular, must have become quite numerous about the eleventh century, for soon after we find in Germany the designation of fidaeler (fiddler) and piper applied to wandering instrumentalists, minstrels, and musician tramps generally, and not infrequently also to the whole community of the Spielleute collectively.

That great wave of religious and chivalrous enthusiasm which at the end of the eleventh century swept over South-western Europe, and on its crest bore the Crusader to the Holy Sepulchre—which irresistibly touched high and low, the beggar and king—also beat against the wandering minstrel's tent. A Christian world had come of age, and troubadour and knight joined hands to celebrate the day with poetry and song and splendid tournaments, and our minstrel shook the nightmare of preceding centuries from him and tuned his fiddle and drew near. Yes, poetry and music had become the fashion, we would say; the pastime, pleasure of the great—nay more, it was the precious jewel in their diadem of knightly virtues, for even kings esteemed it honour to be reckoned kings of song;<sup>1</sup> and naturally the little people of the craft benefited from this change of things. The golden age of troubadour and knight was also the poor minstrel's harvest time.

Nightmare  
of  
Preceding  
Centuries

Trouba-  
dours,  
Minne-  
sänger,  
and Poor  
Minstrels

<sup>1</sup> Richard Lion-heart, Charles of Anjou, Thibaut de Navarre; and in Germany, the Hohenstaufen Emperor Frederick II.



# Story of the Violin

We see them presently tramping through the land, mostly in little bands, as fiddlers, pipers, trumpeters, and tambours, halting wherever their services were in demand, or seeking (the best of them) the protection and employment of the great who needed them. We

see the fiddler—fiddle swung across his back, in striking apparel (if he could afford it, silk and velvet), with peacock or rooster feather in his cap, short frock, and tightly-fitting breeches, as in Fig. 10.

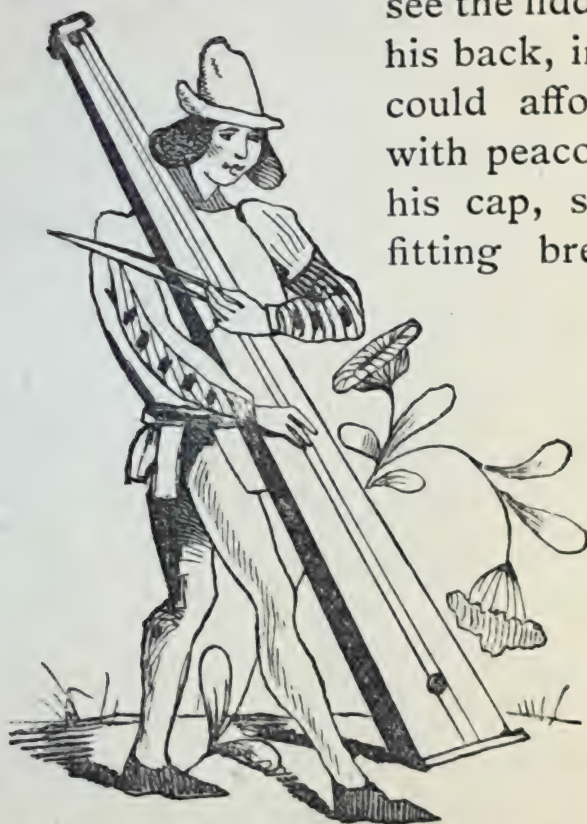


FIG. 10.—PERFORMER ON THE MARINE TRUMPET. TYPE OF DRESS.

There was not a tournament or pageant anywhere that our fiddling, piping friends did not attend in numbers varying with the occasion; no wedding, big or small, but they were there to promote festivity and mirth. Not seldom they went away richly rewarded, next to halt on a village

common, where young and old gathered around them for a dance. Again they would pass a castle on the way, and, when a kind and open-handed knight granted permission, perform in the court with its mossy well and shady bass-wood tree, while perhaps the sweet-faced

Playing  
before the  
Castle



## Romantic Age

children of the knight, half curious and half anxious, at safe distance watched, open-mouthed, the queer antics of the fiddle-bow, and my fair lady from the windows of her bower smiled upon the picturesque scene, and then gave orders to feed the poor fellows well. Or they would be admitted (if not too many) into the immediate presence of the master to entertain him when he sat at meals. Sometimes a noble knight kept in his pay a little band to follow him on marches and to tournaments.<sup>1</sup>

By the world in general these wandering minstrels, or, more properly, musicians, were still held in very low esteem. Only one step separated them from the wayside tramp and miscreant. The old law-books of Germany declared them as "ehr und rechtlos" (without honour and right); their children were considered illegitimate; they were not allowed to take up a trade, and when they died the holy Sacraments were as often as not refused them by the Church, and whatever property they left was confiscated by the magistrate.<sup>2</sup> Yet the charm of an apparently free and independent life, in days when the spirit of adventure ran high among all classes, attracted many elements which otherwise would have kept aloof. Nor were they all poor and

Their  
Social  
Position

<sup>1</sup> From Ulrich von Lichtenstein's *Frauendienst* (Lachman Ed., 1665) we learn that this noble, in 1227, had in his suite: two trombone-players, two fiddlers and one flutist, on horseback, to charm away with their gay music the fatigues of the journey.

<sup>2</sup> See the so-called *Sachsenspiegel*, the law-book for Northern Germany in the early Middle Ages (1215-35).



## Story of the Violin

of low descent. That singular, grotesque mediæval product, the wayfaring scholar, had long been partial to the company of the minstrel.

Now it was a friar who got tired of the seclusion, perhaps too the high living of his cloister, and joined the "forces" and the meagre fare, or went about by himself making a livelihood as best he could with the scant musical abilities he happened to possess; or it was a real nobleman who, from love of art and adventure, or through straitened circumstances, shattered hopes, or disappointed love, chose the life of a wandering minstrel. To the latter class belonged the troubadours and minnesänger.

A Keen Distinction      A troubadour, who flourished principally in sunny Provence or in France and Flanders generally, was always of noble birth; not seldom he was a knight, who knew as well how to handle the sword in tournament and battle as to make verses in honour of the fair ladies in the land. He was the honoured guest at kings' and princes' courts. To him my lady threw the rose from her bosom. He only invented the chanson—the poetry and melody—he did not sing himself; he left that to his minstrel or jongleur. When the latter also supplied the music to the poetry of his noble lord, as it often happened, the minstrel was called *trouveur bastard*.

Sometimes a troubadour had a number of musicians, vocal and instrumental, in his service; men whom he



# Romantic Age

had possibly picked out for their superior abilities and gentlemanly manner from among the common lot of wandering musicians. The social position of these jongleurs and *trouveurs* *bastard* was then, if not exactly a high one (on account of their low birth), at least far superior to that of their brothers on the road, and above all, comparatively secure—that is, without the care for daily bread and shelter which were inseparable from a life on the road.<sup>1</sup> This un-

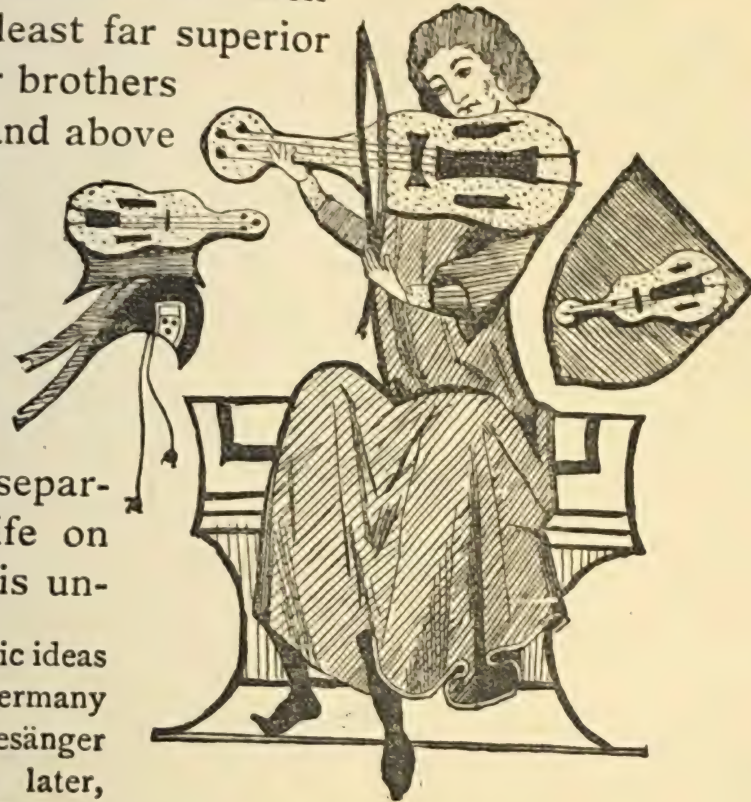


FIG. II.—REINMER THE MINNESÄNGER.

<sup>1</sup> More democratic ideas prevailed in Germany among the minnesänger about a century later, when the second Crusade and the splendour of the Hohenstaufen emperors had drawn the high flood

After having accompanied the Duke Frederick to the second Crusade, he died at Vienna about 1215 A.D.

of romance and chivalry from France into a new and wider bed. Some of the minnesängers, it is true, employed also musicians to help them in the interpretation of their poetic creations, but on the whole they did not think it beneath them to sing and play themselves (see Fig. II), and had no need of fiddlers and pipers. Moreover, high birth was not an absolute, essential qualification for the minnesänger; we find among them some illustrious names of low descent.



## Story of the Violin

deniable advantage accorded to the few compared to the great majority, led probably to the founding of the first privileged limited company of musicians, *La Confrérie des Ménestriers*,<sup>1</sup> in Paris, a step that not only called forth similar organisations<sup>2</sup> in other countries, but, one may say, foreshadowed a great change which was soon to come over the life of the mediæval fiddler and piper.

The swan-song of the Minnesänger had scarcely died away, slowly over castles, rivers, hills and dales, when there came a rude awakening from the pleasant dream of romance, love, and chivalry. We next find Germany in the throes of a reign of terror—a kingless time,—the interregnum, as it is called. And next, again her people draw behind the walls of strong cities, where they feel more secure against the unlawful inroads of degenerate knights and highwaymen who infest the roads and river-sides. Then in consequence

The  
Meister  
Song is  
Born and  
Reared

of this centralisation of life in the cities, these grow in size, power, wealth, and influence. All manner of trade and handicraft is stimulated, even poetry and art begin to sprout among the solid burgers. The Meister song is born and reared. Bakers, shoemakers, tailors, and carpenters form worshipful companies under

<sup>1</sup> Founded 1330, patented 1331, under the patron saints St. Genest and St. Julien, and a king, *Roi des Ménestriers*. See Vidal: *Les Instruments à Archet*, vol. i.

<sup>2</sup> In Vienna the Oberspiel-grafen-amt; also in England at Beverley, in Yorkshire. See Busby: *History of Music*.



## Romantic Age

the strong arm of the magistrate and night-watchman. And our fiddling friends of the road? They also have drawn closer together for mutual protection, because the laws of the land withheld it from them. They have likewise formed associations with laws and regulations of their own. Musicians from all over the land meet at certain intervals in certain places, and settle difficulties among themselves under a high court of their own.

The  
Fiddler  
draws into  
the Towns

That is not enough. Some indeed continue a roaming, dissolute existence in the showman's camp (and have continued to this day); but the better among them find a precarious life on the insecure roads less and less to their taste, and for the most plausible of reasons seek the towns and settle down. Thus the wandering minstrel and musician became a thing of the past. The old times had gone never to return, and a century or two later the fiddling tramp *d'autrefois* sat a respectable citizen with his friend Thomas, the comfortable town piper, and his friend Schmidt, master saddler, or baker, or tailor, over the mug of ale, talking of the good old times of his great grandfather—or the bad old times? Ah, old times are always good!



## CHAPTER X.

### A RETROSPECT.

MORE than six hundred years of history, of human progress, of an astounding musical development in European countries lie between us and the men to whose hands was once principally entrusted the existence of instrumental music. It was a babe then, which might have died from the inclemency of the times, or of starvation by the road-side; but it grew in spite of all, and now fills the world with its glory. Poor minstrel, poor fiddler, piper and tambour who had the

care of it! Somehow I have to think of  
**A Poor** the poor, despised earth-worm preparing in  
**Despised** spring the hard frozen ground in our gardens  
**Drudge** and fields to receive the seed which is to transform the barren land into beds of flowers and shrubs. What else was he but such a poor, despised drudge?

Some of the roseate light which romance has shed around the noble troubadour and minnesänger has also fallen on the memory of their humble brother as a ray of the sun falls charitably on the tombstone under which some long-forgotten hero sleeps. Yet, what a poor compensation—even in memoriam—for the neglect, the contempt, the hardships, persecutions he had to



# Retrospect

suffer; and what still poorer compensation for his inestimable service to our glorious art. He did it unconsciously, no doubt. He was no hero, no martyr who lives and dies for a great cause, as geniuses and other men have done before and after him. He never pretended to be more than he was, and he was more often than not an incorrigible tramp and a nuisance, particularly to beadles and ministers of the law. Though it must have required no small degree of—call it devotion or dog-like faithfulness to his calling, to remain a hunted-down, ill-paid, ill-treated musician, when it would have been easier and more lucrative perhaps to become something else worse—a knave.

A Poor  
Compensation

As to his service to music there cannot be two opinions. How would music have fared if its progress had been left entirely in the hands of those learned men who laboured behind gloomy cloister walls in the tracks of Hucbald and Guido of Arezzo? Perhaps it would have come down to us like Chinese music, dried up, a mummy instead of a thing of life and beauty. For—

How would  
Music have  
Fared?

A Mummy  
—A Thing  
of Life and  
Beauty

“Grau ist alle Theorie,  
Grün ist des Lebens junger Baum.”  
—GOETHE'S *Faust*.

If the soul of music is the folk-song, if out of it sprang in course of time that wealth of melody without which it is impossible to imagine our modern musical art and its greatest exponents—those poor



## Story of the Violin

dejected fellows are before all to be thanked. It was their lot to invent and spread about those treasures which sprang up like lovely flowers from untilled ground, planted by the hand of God seemingly, without beginning—from the golden heart of the people. They picked them up and carried them hither and thither, sang and played them, and gave them back to the people, only made dearer by their wanderings. Again, it was the wayfaring musician who made absolute music a thing to be loved and desired by the lowly and the high, who made it truly cosmopolitan as he himself was.

The wonders of polyphony even to-day appeal only to the few chosen ones. In those illiterate times what would have been the fate of music if its popularity had depended on the unsingable, unplayable, and indigestible harmonic essays of the declared, uncompromising theorists? Would it not have been almost as hopeless as trying to convince children of the beauty of literature by means of spelling lessons in Greek or Latin? Even in his own self-created, unapproachable sphere of theoretical discoveries, did the plodding scholar, who looked down contemptuously on the incorrigible musician-tramp, never deign to take a hint from him? Long before the scholar had made up his mind to the use of thirds and sixths, the stupid, uneducated fellow of a fiddler had bombarded his ears with these forbidden intervals, providing, of course, he honoured with his presence fairs and public places of amusements where our fiddler reigned supreme.



# Retrospect

Did contempt for the perpetrator of these harmonic crimes always act like cotton-wool in the ear of the scholar, shutting it to the sensibility of the crime, nay, to its beauty?

Harmonic  
Crimes

Lastly, it was the minstrel and musician who created the demand for instruments and, following it, the demand for improvements on them. Thus

the fiddler of the eleventh and twelfth centuries was directly father to the ultimate creation of the violin; while in the develop-

The  
Demand for  
Instruments

ment of the clavier and organ, the favourite instruments of the learned musician, he had no

share. But in singing the praises of our humble servant of the art—the mediæval instrumentalist, the fiddler and piper—let

Father to  
the  
Ultimate  
Creation of  
the Violin

us not think little of the noble stock from which sprang Dunstable, Dufay,

Josquin, Orlando di Lasso, and the whole galaxy of later musical giants. It was the scholar, after he

had mastered the art of polyphony and had learned to infuse into formerly dead creations the spark of life, of melody, feeling, etc., who inspired the lowly instrumentalist with loftier art-conceptions,

stimulated his industry, his technical efforts, and widened his sphere of usefulness, polyphonic choral singing in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries being, as we shall see, largely responsible for the various improved

Choral  
Singing in  
14th and  
15th  
Centuries

forms of the viol. The predecessors of Palestrina, Bach, and Beethoven paved also the way for Corelli and Tartini.



## CHAPTER XI.

### COMPETITORS.

WE leave now the fiddler of the early Middle Ages to consider shortly the progress which bow-instruments made under the auspices of the times.

Primitive We found the primitive rebec or gigue  
Rebec in the South-west of Europe from the beginning of the ninth century, and about two centuries later an unmistakable ancestor of the viol—the fiedel.

Of these two the first underwent few changes. It lived through the vicissitudes of the fleeting centuries with something of true Eastern imperturbability as the constant, faithful companion of its first friend, the minstrel. After it had come to the height of its popularity in the hands of Jean Char-millon, whom Philip the Fair of France created (1235) king of ribouds, on account of his cleverness on the rebec (see Fig. 12), its star slowly declined again, and it ended a long and eventful career in rather straitened circumstances: some<sup>1</sup> say in France as the companion of the com-

<sup>1</sup> Vidal: *Les Instruments à Archet*, vol. i.



# Competitors

monest street fiddler as late as the end of the eighteenth century. It gave up its life—like the worm for the chrysalis—for the sake of the violin, as did also its life-long cousin and fellow-traveller and competitor, the viol. Its form has been immortalised in many pictures, the finest perhaps being that of Fra Angelico in the gallery *degli Uffizi* at Florence. Who has not admired that sweet-faced angel holding with the most perfect grace her rebecca? Of a truth, dying so—in the arms of an angel—should have been sweet. Though its voice has been silenced, its memory will be kept green as long as admiring eyes fall on that lovely guardian of its form.

Fellow-  
traveller  
and  
Competitor

Fra  
Angelico's  
Sweet-faced  
Angel

We had opportunity, through the courtesy of Signor G. Branzoli, librarian of St. Cecilia in Rome, to play on a rebec. It looked old and crude enough to pass for a contemporary of Colin Musset, though it may only have been a later-date copy constructed after an original design. If we remember rightly, it was worked—body, neck, scroll, and all—from one hollowed-out piece of hard wood, presumably cherry, the finger-board being glued to the neck so as to leave a little aperture, through which one could perceive that the neck was hollow; in addition to this strange third sound-hole, there were two rather large and crudely-cut *f* holes in the belly. Three strings, a low bridge, and a crude attempt at a scroll completed the instrument. The tone was agreeable and sufficiently loud to admit of the belief that



# Story of the Violin

Jean Charmillon, king of ribouds, as far as his instrument went, was not so very badly off after all. Branzoli also speaks of the tone of the primitive rebec as having been sweet and "insinuante" and resembling the human voice.<sup>1</sup> This is rather in striking contrast to an opinion we find quoted by Vidal<sup>2</sup> from French sources. But in a case like this it is certainly safe to take a middle course, making due allowance for prejudices against an instrument which then had already been relegated to the lowest rank.

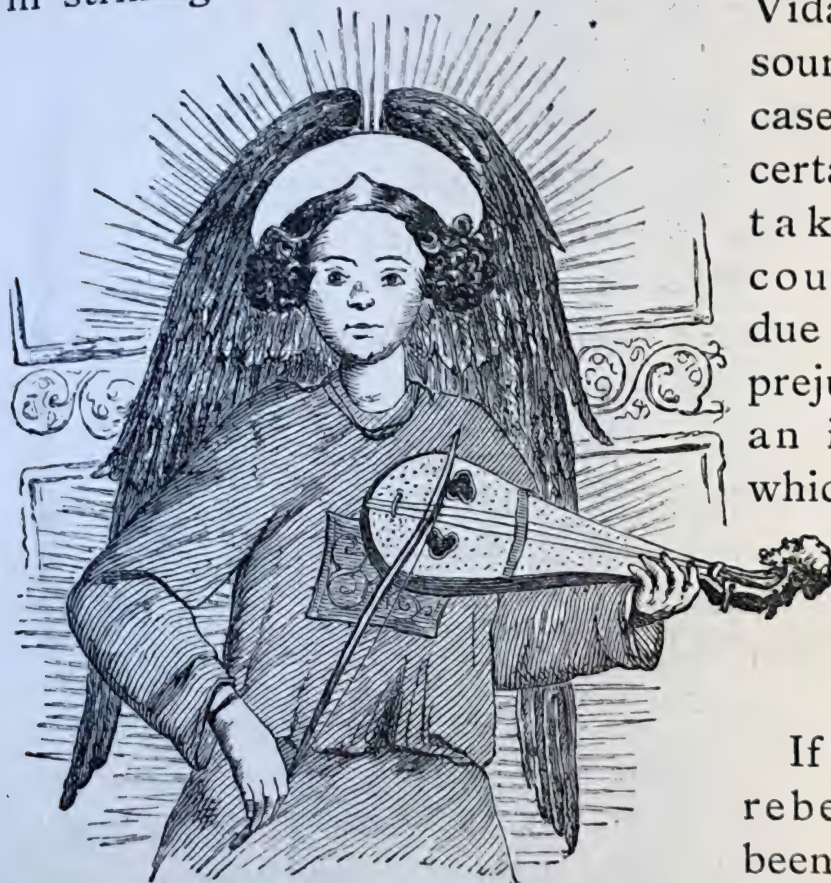


FIG. 12.—REBEK.

From an Italian painting of the thirteenth century.

son with the viol of the times, Fra Angelico (1387-1455) would hardly have associated his angel, the exponent

<sup>1</sup> Branzoli: "La voce era graziosa ed insinuante a somiglianza della voce umana."—*Manuale Storico del Violinista*, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Vidal: *Les Instruments à Archet*, vol. i.



# Competitors

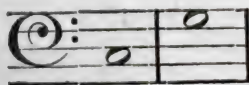
of heavenly music, with an instrument proverbially "criant" and objectionable.

There seem to have been rebecs of various sizes and varying pitch. According to Fétis,<sup>1</sup> Jerome of Moravia,



FIG. 13.—VIËLLE OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY.

a monk living in the thirteenth century, speaks of the rebec as a grave-toned instrument, tuned as follows:—



Considering the general form of the gigue, low pitch can hardly have yielded a satisfactory tone, and

<sup>1</sup> *Stradivari*, p. 30. On the tuning of the rebecs, see also Ruehlmann, *Die Geschichte der Bogen-instrumente mit Atlas*.



# Story of the Violin

it is not surprising that the place of the bass in a quartet<sup>1</sup> of rebecs was usually filled by an instrument called the marine trumpet<sup>2</sup> (see Fig. 10).

More varied were the changes which the viol, or rather the fiedel or oldest predecessor of the viol, had to suffer before it found its last rest in the form of the violin. We know very little of its whereabouts until the beginning or middle of the thirteenth century, when it must have been in considerable vogue in Southern Europe.



FIG. 14.—PLAYER OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

According to Branzoli,<sup>3</sup> there is in the archives of Bologna a decree of the year 1261 forbidding—at the risk of a fine of one hundred soldi for the first offence—the going about and playing the viol by night in the streets of that city. A similar law existed also in England several centuries later.

From the thirteenth century we find the viol mentioned in many poetical productions, particularly of Provence, and also in many illustrations representing the instrument in various modifications: sometimes

<sup>1</sup> and <sup>2</sup> *Stradivari*, pp. 31, 32.

<sup>3</sup> G. Branzoli: *Manuale Storico del Violinista*, 1894.



# Competitors

employed like the Spanish guitar, sometimes played with a bow (see Figs. 13 and 14), and lastly also played by means of a wheel which was inside the sounding-box and consisted of resined horse-hair. In this latter form it went in France under the name of *vielle* (evidently a modification of the word *viole*), in Germany as *Bettler leyer*, in England as *hurdy-gurdy* (see Fig. 15).

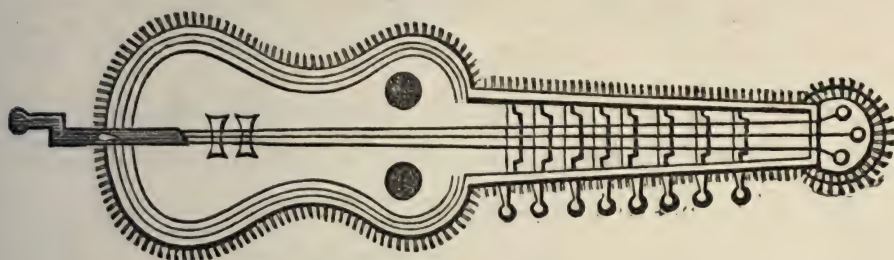


FIG. 15.—ORGANISTRUM.

A large kind of hurdy-gurdy, which was played by two persons (see Fig. 9); in use as early as the tenth century.

Generally speaking, from the more frequent representations of the gigue or rebec in the hands of the minstrels and wandering fiddlers at those times (11th-13th centuries), one might infer that as a bow instrument the early viol did not appeal to them as strongly as the smaller, more easily handled gigue. Then in succeeding centuries this changed, and the viol in its many—nay, almost countless—varieties and modifications in size, pitch, and number of strings, became *the* bowed instrument in preference to any other.

The Bowed  
Instrument  
by Prefer-  
ence



## CHAPTER XII.

### THE INSTRUMENT OF RESPECTABILITY.

THE minstrel and fiddler of the tenth and thirteenth centuries had, we have seen, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries abandoned his wayfaring methods and life. He had—with some exceptions, of course—settled down in the towns and cities and become a respectable, law-abiding citizen. That, doubtless, was a step in the right direction, though it may have cost him many a pang when the birds in spring called to him, or when he saw the clouds sailing yonder high above the church steeple on paths of azure-blue like big white ships, bidding him follow into the wide, wide world which once had been his, and he had instead to stay in the low, evil-smelling “Giebel-stübchen” (garret) with wife and children and be respectable. Yet in winter he appreciated the warmth of the fireside and the groschen<sup>1</sup> that came in regularly, and not, as once, at the point of the fiddle-bow—or worse, not at all, with the result that he had to starve and sleep under a haystack, and be hunted down the next

<sup>1</sup> A small coin.



# Instrument of Respectability

morning by the peasant's maledictions and dog. He too, because the time hung heavy on him, practised more diligently, and he had a clearer head for work (the old night-watchman took care of that). His *technique* in consequence improved, and as it improved, the desire for better instruments made itself felt, and this spurred the clever cabinetmaker to extra efforts.

Spurred  
the clever  
Cabinet-  
maker to  
extra  
Efforts

These efforts were directed—as the *gigue* did not offer the same scope—towards the improvement of the viol form. The viol, in short, together with the lute, became the instrument of respectability.

Improve-  
ment of  
the Viol  
Form

As already mentioned, towards the end of the fourteenth century polyphonic writing and choral singing received a great stimulus through the musical genius of Dufay and Dunstable and the early Netherland contrapuntists, and this again reacted naturally on the instrumental music and the instrumentalists of the day. Thus far the latter had had no part in art-music. A great many of them probably did not know till then one note from another, though they might have played on the fiddle so as to make a maiden's heart flutter and bring life into the stiff legs of a septuagenarian. Now they were employed by the city fathers among others, not only to furnish the instrumental music on festive occasions,

Stimulus  
through  
the Genius  
of Dufay  
and  
Dunstable

Instrument-  
alists now  
Employed  
in the  
Churches



## Story of the Violin

pageants, corporation banquets, funeral and wedding processions, dances, etc., etc., but they were drawn into the music-making at the churches. Next, they learned the notes—if they had not done so before—to double the voice parts in choral singing. An inde-

**Further Stimulus** pendent orchestral (instrumental) accompaniment did not yet exist. This practice gave birth to the construction of different-

sized viols: the larger ones naturally corresponding to and supporting the bass; the middle-sized ones the tenor, and so forth. In this way, to

**Construction of Different-sized Viols** satisfy a want, whole groups of the same species of instruments were called into existence. There were bass viols, tenor and treble viols, etc., with varying numbers of

strings.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the construction of the large-sized instruments led to the introduction of corner

**Corner Blocks inserted** blocks, which mark another important step in advance in instrument-making. They permitted an increase of tension of the resonant box formerly impossible, and thereby a freer transmission of the vibrations of the strings.

Besides these several groups of instruments in use until well into the sixteenth century, and all going under the name of viol and specified in the works of Agricola<sup>2</sup> and Michael Prætorius,<sup>3</sup> there were others of special design which in this or that country, for a time at least, enjoyed popularity. In Italy it was the "viola

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix.



# Instrument of Respectability

di spalla," which we see depicted on Raphael's picture, "Apollo in Parnassus,"

Special  
Favourite  
Designs in  
Different  
Countries

in the hands of Apollo. The great painter, it is said, took for his model of the Greek god the then celebrated viol-player, Sansecondo. Further, there existed the "viola bastarde,"

a viol with six strings of the bass-viol kind, a little larger (broader) than the viola da gamba, and held like the latter—that is, like our 'cello—between the knees. Also, the "viola di lira," a little smaller than the 'cello; and the "viola di bordone" (Fig. 16), a formidable-looking affair with six strings, underneath which were twenty-two metal strings<sup>1</sup> that served as sympathetic strings; and last, the "viola d'amour," which is yet occasionally heard in concerts.

Fancy a large viola: seven strings, partly gut, partly covered with silver wire, tuned as follows:—



<sup>1</sup> See *Catalogue of Musical Instruments*, South Kensington Museum, by Carl Engel.

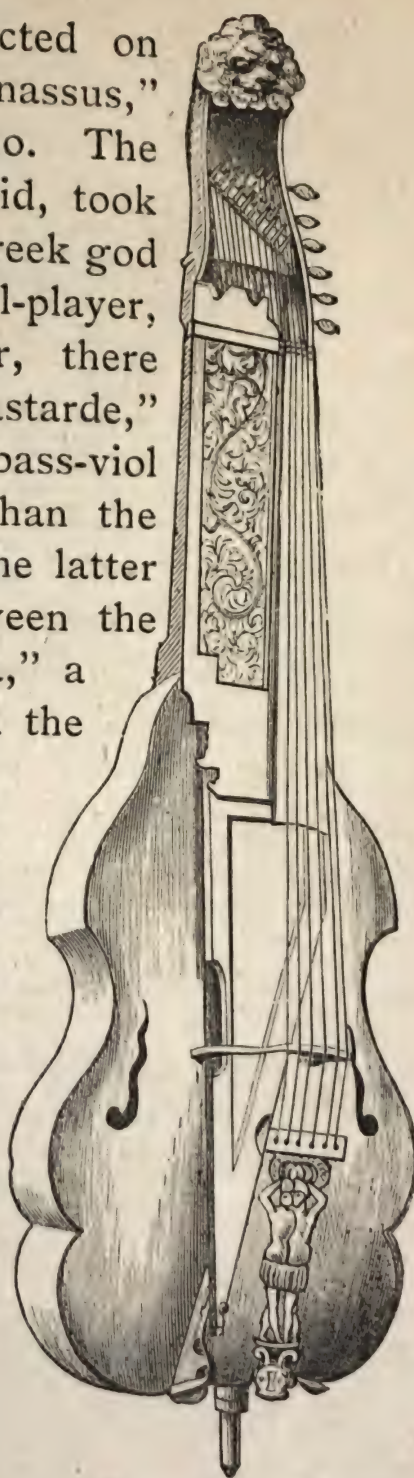


FIG. 16.—VIOLA DI BORDONE.  
Descriptive Catalogue, South  
Kensington Museum.



## Story of the Violin

are strung over a bridge, while another set of seven very thin metal strings, tuned in unison with the above, lie in the hollow between the feet of the bridge and vibrate in sympathy<sup>1</sup> when the bow is drawn across the top strings. The tone of the viola d'amour is rich, mellow, and sympathetic—be it a little nasal (a feature common to all the old violas).

It is interesting to note that Prætorius has ascribed the invention of the viola d'amour to the English. At all events the English must have been particularly enamoured of the charms of the viol kind of instrument, for England was the last country which yielded its viols to the irresistible claims of the instruments of the violin family.

Till well into the middle of the eighteenth century viols were yet to be found in use, the viola da gamba or bass viol being the last to make room for the 'cello. Only the double-bass has been left to this day to tell in its own inimitable way of the past glories of its kind.

<sup>1</sup> The principle of sympathetic strings is of very ancient origin. According to Carl Engel, the Hindoos and Persians employ them on several of their bowed instruments.



## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE VIOLIN.

So the time had drawn near when our violin was to appear and usurp the sceptre in instrumental music, driving before it—king that it is—all the manifold instruments which represented string music in past ages. It was simplicity once more which conquered complexity. In connection with the viola di bordone and the viola d'amour we see this strikingly illustrated. There were other reasons for the coming and the easy conquest of the violin. In conformity with altering art conditions, an instrument was needed of a more pleasing, practical, and easier-handled form than the old violas da braccio (arm viols) offered; next, an instrument which in its tone corresponded perfectly to the soprano voice, which the old treble viols and violettas did not, wherefore a cornet had often to be employed in their stead; and finally an answer was needed to the prophetic knock of time, which knew the world was ready to receive its musical art ideal. The unborn souls of Bach and Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, clamoured at the throne of God to be born into this earth.

Were the  
Times really  
Ready?



## Story of the Violin

But were the times really ready? Let us glance around a little. We stand at the threshold of a new age, there can be no mistake. The surplus animal energy of European nations had partly spent itself in more than a thousand years of incessant, cruel wars. For a time at least Europe draws up the vizor to breathe and look about. Away in the dim distance across the sea looms up America, which is to shift existing laws of gravity, and India beckons the mariner with golden finger. In Germany the art of printing is invented (1450);<sup>1</sup> and England sees the last of the Wars of the Roses, and dreams of Shakespeare and an Elizabethan age. What of Italy?

That remarkable new birth of intellectual and artistic Europe, the Renaissance, had just been ushered in.

**The Re-naissance** It was blooming in Italy. Everywhere a veritable spring. The magic brush of Fra Angelico had drawn to earth the heavenly host of messengers, angelic robins, nightingales, and thrushes to call it forth. Now Raphael was about to empty his horn of plenty, and Michael Angelo to lay his best at the altar of architecture and sculpture. The air was filled with mystery and rhyme and thought where Dante, Ariosto, and Boccaccio tread. And the divinest of the arts, music, was following that glorious pageant of great men and things; as the red roses—the precious blood of spring—come only late in June to crown all that went before. Palestrina, Carissimi,

<sup>1</sup> The art of printing music by means of movable types was invented by Ottaviano Petrucci (born 1466).



## Violin

Gabrieli, Scarlatti came to live and leave their records on the pages of musical history. Lastly, there came also the remarkable men who will for ever be associated with the violin—to whose genius we owe its existence.



## CHAPTER XIV.

### TWO GASPAROS.

WHO was the first lute, viol, or cabinet maker (it matters not) to introduce the form of the modern violin? This question has not yet been satisfactorily answered, though it is often dismissed with the reply that it was Gasparo da Salo, and on his head, therefore, the violin world has heaped sole honours of authorship.

Although there can be no doubt that Da Salo's violins are among the first of which we have absolute evidence, the possibility of his not being the first maker has long been felt. Indeed, an opinion is now widely prevalent that the real invention of our kingly instrument must be ascribed to another Gasparo; or, at least, that this other Gasparo shares with him the honours. He was a certain Gaspar Duiffoprugcar. To many a Strange and New Name To many of our readers perhaps a new and strange name in such illustrious company, but it will be found that its bearer's claims stand close inspection indeed. Who was this Gaspar Duiffoprugcar? He was a maker of lutes and viols of the most marvel-



## Two Gasparos

lous workmanship—some bass viols of his, exquisitely wrought, being still extant—a man famous in his time, when Gasparo da Salo was only just born. Little more was known of him until a certain Frenchman, Jean Baptiste Bonaventure Rochefort (1777-1833) startled one day the violin world by new information regarding him. According to Rochefort, Duiffoprugcar was born in the Italian Tyrol about 1469, established himself at Bologna as luthier with a brother, Uldrich, and was taken by François I. in 1515, in company of no less a genius than Leonardo da Vinci, to Paris as instrument-maker to the royal chapel. Ill-health obliged him, however, to move to Lyons, where he died. A beautiful engraving by Pierre Wœiriot, now at the National Library in Paris, shows the artist in his best years (about forty-eight) surrounded by musical instruments (see Fig. 17). But this was not all. He was also said to be the creator of the modern violin form. And lo and behold! as if by magic, like witnesses unto the truth came forth one by one, from their long hiding-places, six in all, the violins of Duiffoprugcar. They were violins and no mistake; not viols of the fifteenth and sixteenth century kind, but violins pure and simple (be it somewhat heavy and clumsy in their proportions), with most of the well-known characteristics—the square shoulders (in opposition to the slanting ones of the old viols), the well-defined curves and corners in the sides, the scroll and *ff* holes,

Who was  
Gaspar  
Duiffoprugcar?

Six Violins



## Story of the Violin

etc.—besides being marvels of workmanship after the manner of his famous bass viol. The backs are



FIG. 17.—GASPAR DUIFFOPRUGCAR.



## Two Gasparos

laboriously inlaid, adorned with oil paintings<sup>1</sup> of madonnas and saints and coats of arms in colours and gold, the sides bearing verses; the purfling is often double and terminating in arabesques. All are labelled—one dated 1510; another, now at Aix-la-Chapelle, 1511; a third, now at Bologna, 1515; a fourth, 1517; and a fifth one, belonging to the Prince Nicolaus Yous-souppoff<sup>2</sup> in St. Petersburg, has a head (Duiffoprugcar's) carved instead of a scroll, and on the label, "Gaspar Duiffoprugcar Buonomiense, anno 1515."

Stronger proof for Rochefort's claims than these six instruments could hardly have been found, and although certain experts shook their heads and would not believe in the joyous truth that at last the right man, the real inventor of the violin, had been found, Duiffoprugcar's fame rose. Various other writers, like Niederheitmann,<sup>3</sup> presently discovered other facts about him. His name had been really Tieffenbrucker, and evidently being difficult for Italian tongues to pronounce, the master had changed it into Duiffoprugcar, and adopted the name for his labels. Others being half-suspicious of the very early date of his birth and yet not in the position to refute the evidence, sought solace in hunting for his birthplace, and found it not in the Italian Tyrol but in Bavaria, thus making him a genuine German.

Other  
Facts

<sup>1</sup> One was formerly supposed to be by Leonardo da Vinci.

<sup>2</sup> Author of "Observations on the Origin of the Violin," *Journal Encyclop.*

<sup>3</sup> Niederheitmann: *Cremona*.



Harold Veo is a violinist of many years standing who lives in Beaufort, South Carolina. I went antiquing with him one day and we stopped at a shop which had half a dozen old violins for sale. I noticed that as he picked them up he became very interested in a certain one of them.

His interest caused me to keep my eyes and ears open to see what I could find out about violin collecting. I found that most collectors of rare old violins are musicians though not always. Many people collect them as purely decorative and beautiful things. My inquiries lead me to Mr. I. Klymyshyn who has played the violin all his life. He really opened my eyes about violin collecting when he showed me his private collection of about eighty handmade "fiddles." Mr. Klymyshyn started to collect when he was 12 years old. Today his collection includes one made by Gaspard Duffoprugard labeled on the inside and dated 1655. Duffoprugard was a monk. On the back of the violin he carved a replica of the monastery beautifully inlaid with ebony and other exotic woods. The scroll is in the shape of a monk's head and though no one knows, I like to think that it might be a self portrait and that Gaspard D. carved himself right into his instrument for posterity.

"One violin that I own," Mr. Klymyshyn pointed out, "has a particular interest today. It won a

Grand Prix in Hanoi in 1902." Other interesting violins in the collection include a Guerneris, 1727; a Hornsteiner, 1800; a Schweitzer, 1813 plus several early pieces made in America by William Pierce and C. L. Funk.

"Fine old violins improve with age in a way understood only by musicians," says Mr. Klymyshyn. I confirmed this with Harold Veo who says, "About 40 years ago I made a violin for myself. I forgot about it and it has laid all this time untouched in an attic in Birmingham, Alabama. Just last week I found it and played it and you cannot imagine the beautiful improvement in tone that the aging process has performed on my old fiddle."

Many people, however, collect old violins for decoration and great bargains can still be found in old mail-order fiddle catalogs sold in the thousands by Sears and Roebuck at the turn of the century. Each included a booklet showing the buyer how to teach himself to play. And many did so with surprising success. These old home instruction courses have also become collector's items.

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Mr. Sater is the publisher of Joel Sater's Antique Shop Guides. Inquiries and letters about antiques and antiquing are welcome. For reply enclose large, self-addressed, stamped (12 cent) envelope. Write Joel Sater, c/o this newspaper, Box 429, Columbia, Pa. 17512.

*Salem Times-Register*

PROPERTY ELECTS

NEW OFFICERS



Music

# Old Violins — About \$1 Million Worth

By HAROLD C. SCHONBERG

A COUPLE of weeks ago we dropped into the showrooms of Rembert Wurlitzer, Inc., where there was an exhibition of rare violins. The place was a madhouse, almost. It seemed that every violinist in town was there, gawking, murmuring, exclaiming, lusting. Lusting is the word. Sheer lust lapped the room as violinists put their heads to the cases, absolutely drooling as they ogled the various instruments—a Stradivarius here, a Guarneri del Gesù there, an Amati, a Bergonzi, a Gofriller, a da Salo, a Guadagnini. There was excited talk about purfling, varnish, ridges, grafts.

One instrument in particu-

dealers from all over Europe and America was no easy problem. They are as temperamental as the violinists themselves. Once that had been worked out, there was the problem of an exhibition hall. "We wanted it in an art gallery," Mrs. Roth said, "but the insurance company said no. There are about \$1-million worth of instruments here. So my daughter Marianne arranged for Pinkerton guards here, and we had to up our insurance by \$1-million."

That expensive?

## Out of Circulation

"Yes, indeed," said Mrs. Roth. "It's all supply and demand, pure and simple. Prices

ing experts. Mr. Sacconi, 70 years old, is considered the dean of violin-makers and restorers. He came to Wurlitzer's in 1951.

"Come upstairs," said Mrs. Roth. "I want to show you something." She escorted the visitor to a glass case in the middle of the exhibition. In it were two violins. One was the "Hellier" Stradivarius, a beautiful instrument with elaborate inlaid ornamentation. (Only 10 inlaid Strads are known to exist.) Next to it was an exact copy made by Mr. Sacconi.

"It's really exact," said Mrs. Roth. "Mr. Sacconi went so far as to insert the shorter fingerboard and flatter bridge of Stradivari's own day. There are very few old instruments that have not passed through Mr. Sacconi's hands. He has worked on perhaps 400 of the 500 known Strads."

It was about 11 A.M. and the exhibition was not yet open to the public, but quite a few people were grouped here and there around the exhibits.

"They're dealers and restorers," Mrs. Roth said, look-

ing fondly at them. "They're prima donnas, but there have been no arguments yet. They're absolutely marvelous. We've managed to bring together about 70 instruments, 16 of them new, to show what the best modern work is like, and about 50 bows. We've had lots of people coming back every day. There was one family with five kids, and they've been here every single afternoon. I began to get acquainted with the mother. 'Well,' she told me, 'I just wanted my children to see a real Strad.'"



THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, OCTOBER 16, 1966.

# Who Makes Music and Where



Oscar Ghiglia, guitarist, will make his New York debut this evening presenting a program in



Dagmar Koller, soprano, will be a soloist next Friday with the Vienna Johann Strauss Orches-

## THURSDAY

JAN SMETERLIN, pianist, Philharmonic Hall; 8:30 P.M.

Chopin program: Fantasia In F minor (Op. 49); Four Mazurkas; Sonata in B-flat minor (Op. 35); Scherzo in E (Op. 54, No. 4); Grand Valse in A-flat (Op. 42) Six Etudes (Op. 10).

JOHN GATES, pianist, Carnegie Hall; 8:30 P.M.

Sonata in F minor (Op. 61)....Dussek  
Sonata in E-flat minor.....Dukas  
Fantasie Espagnole.....Sorabji  
Second Elegy.....Liszt  
Tarantelle de Bravura on themes from Auber's Masaniello.....Liszt

CATHY BERBERIAN, mezzo-soprano,  
DAVID BURGE, pianist; Carnegie Recital Hall, 8:30 P.M.

## FRIDAY

VIENNA JOHANN STRAUSS ORCHESTRA, Carnegie Hall; 8:30 P.M. Conductor, Eduard Strauss. Dagmar Koller, soprano; Walter Kraeutler, tenor. Overture to Die Fledermaus; Opening Aria of the Baron from Der Zigeunerbaron; Adele's Aria from Fledermaus, Mein Herr Marquis; Draussen in Sievering—Aria from Die Tanzerin Fanny Eissler; Gondellied from Eine Nacht in Venedig.

PAUL SCHOFIELD, pianist, Town Hall; 8:30 P.M.

Toccata in E minor.....Bach  
Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Telemann.....Reger  
Sonata, No. 2.....Scriabin

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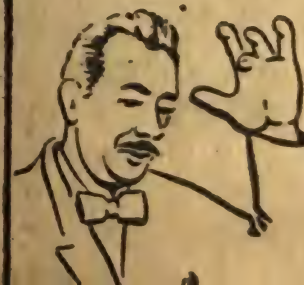
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# Antiquing with

# Joel Sater



Klymyshyn holds famous, beautifully carved violin made by the monk, Gaspard Duffoprugard in 1655. Carved around the box are thw words: "VIVA FVI + IVI SLYIVIS + DEO VI MORT VA +" What do they mean?

*"Old Violins Are Beautiful And  
Decorative"*



lar drew the crowd. They would come in, look around and immediately head for the cabinet in which reposed a Guarneri del Gesù violin named the "ex-d'Egville." It had been brought to America by Walter Hamma of Stuttgart, and was being shown here for the first time.

"Gorgeous!" gasped Joseph Fuchs. "The most beautiful of all! It stands out like a light!" His fingers curled and uncurled. He was playing it.

"A masterpiece," agreed Isaac Stern. He looked at the crowd and grinned. "This," he said, "is the happiest in-group I've seen in years."

A few mornings later we had a visit with Mrs. Lee Wurlitzer Roth, the lady who conceived the violin festival. She is a lively, voluble, youngish-looking woman who lives violins, and she was exhausted.

### Cable From Fussia

"We expected perhaps 50 people at the preview," she said. "Over 300 showed up. Then when the festival opened to the public we've been having 2,000 and more a day. The whole thing has been tremendous. We've even had a telegram from Rostropovich in Russia. It's incredible! Heifetz was up here yesterday and I thanked him for coming. 'Mrs. Roth,' he said, 'I should thank *you*.'"

There were several reasons why Mrs. Roth undertook the festival. For one thing, there had never been anything like it before. For another, she wanted to show the younger generation of violinists what the great instruments looked like in perfect condition. She is convinced that very few violinists know how to take care of, and maintain, violins. She had been married to the late Rembert Wurlitzer, the late ~~violin maker~~ and Mr. Wurlitzer would go cluck-cluck when they examined fine instruments sent in for repair.

Getting together violin

ing up as the supply becomes exhausted. So many instruments, for instance, are going into museums, which means that they are out of circulation for good. This year eight Cremonese violins were purchased by museums. About 10 years back, the highest price ever paid for a Cremonese was about \$60,000. Today, offers for \$100,000 have been made for top instruments."

Not only do museums put great violins out of circulation. Dealers themselves sometimes do. They fall in love with their instruments. One dealer in Switzerland, Mrs. Roth said, has been offered absolutely fabulous sums for a Strad in his possession. But he will not sell until he finds a replacement. "Why do I want the money when I have this?" he says.

In a way Mrs. Roth can understand his point of view. Any dealer of importance needs to have several great instruments always on hand. And violin bows, too.

"Just as nobody has ever been able to duplicate a Strad," Mrs. Roth said, "it is also impossible to duplicate a Tourte bow. The wood itself is very rare. Pernambuco. It comes from Brazil. About 10 years ago a good Tourte bow would bring between \$1,000 and \$1,500. Today the prices are out of sight. We have in our vault a Tourte bow for which we have been offered \$11,000. We won't sell. A great house like Wurlitzer has to have permanently one great example, if only for modern bow-makers to copy."

### Touch of the Past

Mrs. Roth led the visitor downstairs to the Wurlitzer workshop, a long room facing West 42d Street. It was a touch of a previous century. Workmen, all specialists, were slowly, unhurriedly, taking violins apart and lovingly putting them together. At one bench Simone Fernando Sacconi was discussing an Amati violin with some of the visit-





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# Story of the Violin

So matters stood when quite recently (1893) a Frenchman, Henri Coutagne,<sup>1</sup> sent another thunderbolt into the happy, peaceful camp of the avowed Duiffoprugcarites. It was nothing less than a complete refutation of the hitherto accepted facts and dates as to Duiffoprugcar's life. Careful research in the archives at Lyons and among the documents bearing on François I.'s private expenses, etc., had convinced this latest authority that Duiffoprugcar was born about 1514, instead of in 1469, never lived in Paris or was connected in any way with François I., but came to Lyons about 1553, took out his naturalisation papers in 1558, and died in Lyons in 1570 or 1571. He was there a prosperous maker of lutes and viols until misfortune overtook him. He died in misery and debt, leaving a wife and four children.

Coutagne further tells us that Duiffoprugcar was born in Freising, thirty kilometres from Munich, and probably learned the art of lutherie at one of the South German centres, and that without ever having been in Italy, he emigrated to Lyons, where lute-making seems to have flourished at the time.

He also gives conclusive proof that the portrait in question, which shows Duiffoprugcar at the age of 48, was made in 1562 by Wœiriot (born 1531 or 1532), then living in Lyons. Thus we are confronted on the one hand by positive documentary facts, and on the other hand by the certainly not less positive evidence in workmanship and wood,

Con-  
tradiction

<sup>1</sup> *Gaspar Duiffoprugcar et les luthiers Lyonnais du 16e. siècle*; 1893.



## Two Gasparos

besides the probability that the violin was invented before the early Brescian and Cremonese makers. The solution of the mystery seems at present almost hopeless, unless it can be proved that the labelled violins attributed to Duiffoprugcar were not his make. At present they are believed to be genuine. M. Coutagne does not pretend to have seen any of the six labelled violins, but he gives the description of one attributed to Duiffoprugcar without label which now belongs to the museum of the Conservatoire of Paris. He says:

“Il est d'une forme assez lourde dont le patron primitivement grand a été recoupé par *Chanot* mais dont les ouïs sont dessinées en *ff* très pure et dont la tête est sculptée en volute classique. Les deux faces sont garnies de marqueteries figurant des fleurs reliées par des filets et un coq au centre de la table de fond. Les ornements contrastent par leur grossièreté, avec ceux des trois basses de viole précédentes.”

While I leave to my readers to acquaint themselves with the particulars of the argument on this interesting subject at the hand of the above-mentioned works of Niederheitmann, Youssoupoff, Charles Read, Coutagne, and others, the question suggests itself: Is it really possible that Duiffoprugcar should have invented the modern form of the violin? Contradictions  
I do not see any reason why the facts Reconcil-  
established by Coutagne as to his time and able  
place of birth, etc., should not be reconcilable with the claims of Niederheitmann and others as to the genuineness of the violins attributed to



# Story of the Violin

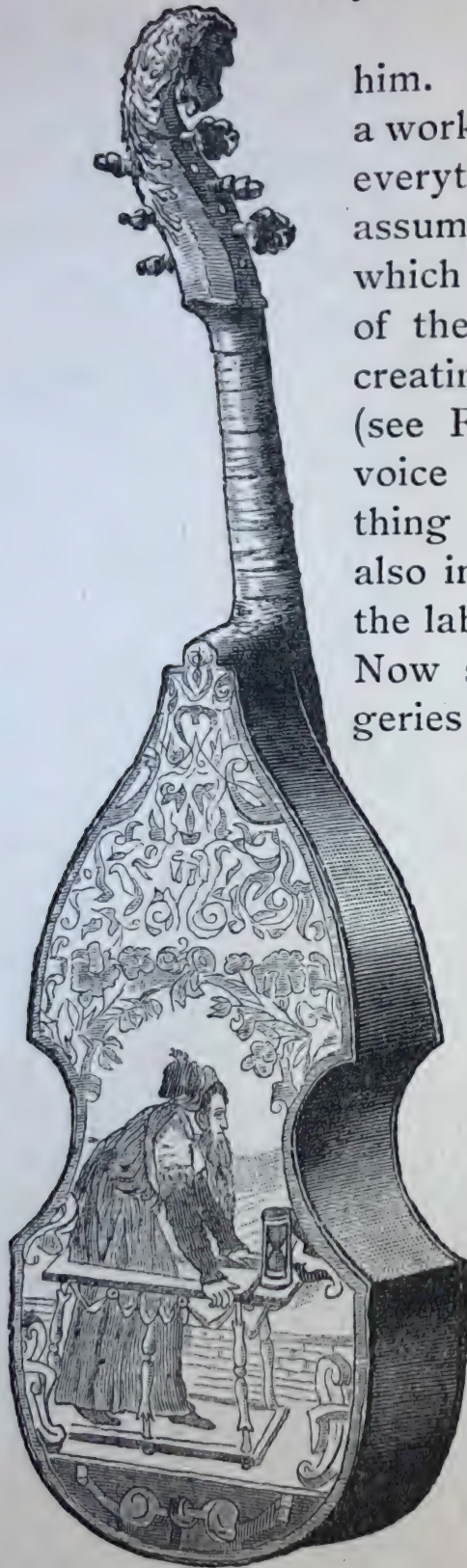


FIG. 18.—VIOLA DA GAMBA OF  
DUIFFOPRUGCAR, MADE 1547 A.D.

him. In the first place, they are of a workmanship worthy of the master; everything seems to point to this assumption. The same poetical mind which (in sympathy with the spirit of the times) was not content with creating in his exquisite bass viol<sup>1</sup> (see Fig. 18) a thing with a lovely voice only, but wished to make it a thing of beauty as well, shows itself also in these gems of violins. It is the labels that present the difficulty. Now supposing the labels are forgeries and the instruments quite genuine, is such a thing not possible—nay, feasible? Supposing that, when the fame of Duiffoprugcar (which had paled before the fame of the later Italian makers) was first launched into the world by Rochefort, some men, profiting by the tide and little dreaming of the difficulties to which their unscrupulous eagerness would lead, stamped these gems with what they thought the proper dates of their creation? Or supposing also that this mild fraud was

<sup>1</sup> Now in the museum of the Conservatoire at Brussels.



## Two Gasparos

perpetrated with the best intention some time after the master's death, when repairs or the wish to reduce the original thickness of the neck, etc., necessitated the opening up of the instruments? Labels certainly helped to preserve their identity. And *what* liberty was taken with labels a century or two ago!

Liberty  
taken with  
Labels

As regards the assumption of Coutagne, that Duiffoprugcar learned the art of lutherie in Germany, and migrated to Lyons without having been in Italy, it is only a surmise. If his name was originally Tieffenbrucker, the alteration into Duiffoprugcar or Duiffopruggar is Italian on the face of it—scarcely French. Only a soft-tongued son of Italy has such strong objections to hard-sounding consonants at the beginning of a word, and does not rest content till he has softened it down to his own idea of euphony. Besides, if in the first records of Duiffoprugcar in Lyons he appears under this and not under his original name Tieffenbrucker, it is more likely that he had adopted that name before and brought it with him. Furthermore, certain details in the form of some of the instruments surrounding the artist on Wœiriot's picture invite significant conclusions.

Modifica-  
tion of his  
Name

But let us now look at this man Duiffoprugcar from another point of view—at, I will call it, the internal evidence for his claims. Let us imagine him in early youth in a little Bavarian town. Perhaps returning pilgrims or soldiers had carried the first fairy tales of Italy

Internal  
Evidence  
for his  
Claims



## Story of the Violin

and the wonders of her early renaissance to our little boy while he was helping his father in the carpenter's shop, and kindled in his heart the wish which emperors could not resist. Perhaps the youth felt genius throbbing in his breast like growing-pains by day and night, or destiny held out a crown to him beyond the snow-clad mountains yonder, where the swallows went in autumn.

The art of viol and lute making had already flourished in the genial South, when instruments of war and torture, sword-blades, pikes and halberds were yet more or less the order of the day. As early as the thirteenth century we find Brescia mentioned as a famous centre of lutherie. About 1450 there lived in the old city a celebrated maker of lutes and viols, Kerlino. His name rather indicates German extraction, being probably an Italianisation of Kerl, a name not unfrequent in some parts of Germany. Kerlino's reputation would have as easily as not attracted the influx of foreign young workmen to Brescia. At all events, is it improbable that young Gasparo, though Kerlino was at that time dead, found his way to some other Brescian maker's shop as apprentice or workman, stayed there (in Br scia), or moved to Bologna, and later was induced to change his domicile for France? In Lyons he was prosperous, probably a man in easy circumstances, as appears from the portrait engraved by a well-known artist. Is it difficult to imagine him turning out lutes and bass viols, admirable works, getting good pay for them, and being honoured by the best in the land, and yet turning with inexpressible longing to the pursuance of labours of



## Two Gasparos

which none but he could understand the why and wherefore? or trying to follow the trace of a living voice in him—the voice of the yet unborn violin, as the half-blind follows the rays of the sun which penetrate through his heavy eyelids, groping his way towards the window? What patience, what toil, what trying and rejecting and trying again were necessary before, step by step, the new could replace the old; before here the proper curve was found, there the neck ended in a noble scroll; before each detail of the modelling that intuition or reflection held out to him to be the right one brought the form nearer the familiar shape which other masters after him developed further and further until, with Stradivarius, the ideal was reached.

It has been said that the innovations on the old viol form were not the work of one single mind, but of many; in other words, that the final form of the violin was the product of the successive efforts of many successive makers unknown to fame. I don't believe it. Great innovations on existing forms, laws, and things—great discoveries are not made by the many, but the few. Not through the slow, muddy channels of mediocrity, but through the bright, quick river of genius flows the gold of knowledge into the world. The initiative to a great change and the first steps are always taken by this or that one, and others then exercise their skill on improvements, and sometimes they, too, get the credit for what they did not do.

Through  
the Bright,  
Quick  
River of  
Genius

So, unless it was one of those unknown prompters of



## Story of the Violin

history—of those nameless, shadowy heroes who behind the stage pull the strings which make the puppets dance in front; who, because the world knows them not, become unreal, immersed in myth and romance; then there is no difficulty in believing that Duiffoprugcar, on the existing lines of the Italian viol, created the modern violin form. His birth fell into the spring of the renaissance. The genial, productive breath which permeated all artistic activity from architecture down to the lowly art of the wood-carver and cabinet-maker, fanned him also. It needed only a fine mind and a hand to match to utilise this new triumphant force for the art of instrument-making. Consider but the general forms of the bass viols, etc., of that time. Are they not distinctly Gothic in feeling and design, matching the painted windows of our Gothic cathedrals—the high slender towers on which the ardent faith of the Middle Ages climbed nearer heaven? And now compare the outlines, the soft, graceful, classic curves of the violin; the scroll, the square shoulders, the delicate moderation in everything. Should the spirit of the early renaissance have had no share in forming these?

Take, then, this man Duiffoprugcar, head and shoulders above all the instrument-makers of his time in mere cleverness; a thinker, a revolutionary besides; a bit of a painter and poet, a philosopher if you will; a man of the world, too, perhaps a friend of the big minds of his time—and you have the picture of a man who, not unlikely, should have been the fit instrument in the



## Two Gasparos

hands of Providence or destiny to give to the world the violin. He did not invent it—no, of course not; but under his hands, as it were, the scattered legacy of former centuries—nay, of thousands of years—crystallised into the form which has been one of the glories of our age.

And now of Gasparo da Salo, who is generally considered to have been the first maker of violins. His name was Gasparo Bertolotti, and he was born in 1542, in a little place situated on the picturesque Lago di Garda, after which he was called Da Salo. We know no more of his youth and apprenticeship than of Duiffoprugcar's.

Perhaps he learned the art of viol and lute-making from some Brescian maker unknown to us. When we hear of him he is established in the famous old place (Brescia) as viol and violin-maker. Doubtless his claim

Gasparo da  
Salo

Know no  
more of his  
Youth and  
Apprentice-  
ship

for having made excellent violins earlier than any other maker (except Duiffoprugcar) is irrefutable; but, even admitted that he went yet one step farther than that other Gasparo, is it proved—nay, is it probable—that he did so without having had cognisance of his celebrated predecessor's work? Was he a man likely to find out for himself everything which makes his instruments so remarkable for us?

His Claim  
Irrefutable

Is it proved that he went the long road which lay between these instruments and the viols of preceding centuries—alone and unassisted? Coming from a small Italian village, he was surely only a humble, illiterate,



# Story of the Violin

be it a very clever, wideawake youth; and there is no proof that he ever went beyond the precincts of his little kingdom, his workshop in Brescia. Of course, as Goethe says, "Es bildet ein Talent sich in der Stille." But this is not exactly a way to broaden and strengthen the mind for grappling with difficulties such as the realisation of a new acoustic ideal in a new form presented.

Was Gasparo da Salo a man who could afford to squander his time on perhaps futile, at any rate unpro-

**Questions** fitable attempts, while his viols fetched him a good income?<sup>1</sup> Or is it more likely that he made violins because they were already invented, and he found a ready market for them?

**Are there any Traces of Development in his Work?** Furthermore, are there any traces of a development in his work from a first feeling his way to the goal of attainment, or do we get at once the realised ideal?

Perhaps others are prepared to answer these questions satisfactorily. I only add yet one more point in favour of the elder Gasparo, and that is a documentary remark which also Fétis mentions.<sup>2</sup> In a

**Two little French Violins** list of instruments used by Monteverde for the performance of his opera *Orfeo*, at Mantua in 1607, the composer names—besides ten viole da braccio (arm viols), three bassi da gamba (leg basses), and two contra-

<sup>1</sup> According to Fétis, he was particularly renowned for his viols (bass viols and double-bass viols).

<sup>2</sup> *Stradivari*.



## Two Gasparos

bassi di viola (double-bass viols)—duoi violini piccoli alla Francese (two little violins of the French kind).

This is one of the first historical records<sup>1</sup> of the word violin, and here it is called French. No French luthier worthy of being thought of as the creator of the violin can be found at that or any preceding period, but the solution lies near when we consider that Duiffoprugcar lived for years in France, and died and was buried there. And had he no pupils?

Whatever be the pretensions of the less-known elder Gasparo, our gratefulness to the well-known younger one is thereby not diminished. Who knows whether, but for the art of the younger one sympathetically carrying out the message of the elder, that message might not have been lost to the world?

Unfortunately, Da Salo's violins have become exceedingly rare, but those still extant, and undoubtedly genuine, are a striking testimony to his noble art. Among them perhaps the finest, at any rate best known, is the violin on which Ole Bull, the famous Norwegian virtuoso, played for many years. His widow recently bequeathed it to her dead husband's birthplace, Bergen. The general characteristics of Da Salo's violins are a large pattern, large *ff* holes, protruding corners, and a dark brown varnish; the tone is large and even. It seems he worked from about 1560 to 1609 or 1610, the time of his death.

General  
Character-  
istics of Da  
Salo's  
Work

<sup>1</sup> Prior records leave it uncertain whether tenor viols are meant or really our small violin.



## CHAPTER XV.

### MAGGINI AND OTHER BRESCIAN MAKERS.

GASPARO'S mantle fell on his pupil, Giovanni Paolo Maggini, who was born in Brescia, 1581, and worked there till about 1632. Maggini's instruments resemble those of his master in their large proportions, but show a great advance in point of view of appearance as well as tone. He also—unlike Da Salo, who made more viols, etc.—confined himself chiefly to the making of violins, which seems to indicate that by the end of the sixteenth century the demand for violins, as compared to viols, had—at least in Italy—become quite general.<sup>1</sup> Experts accord to him a very distinguished place indeed in the history of lutherie; all the more, it is to be regretted that his violins have become so scarce. Their tone is large and noble, slightly veiled; the varnish light brown of remarkable delicacy and transparency; the ribs or sides are narrow; the arching starts almost directly from the edges; the back is often richly orna-

<sup>1</sup> Another proof that the movement in favour of the new form must have begun prior to Gasparo da Salo, as the few violins made by the latter could hardly have created a larger market so soon.



## Maggini and other Brescian Makers

mented and the purfling double.<sup>1</sup> A very fine specimen of a Maggini violin belonged formerly to Charles de Bériot, and another to Hubert Léonard.

Other Brescian makers, who were either contemporaries of Da Salo and Paolo Maggini, or followed them closely, imitating their (particularly Maggini's) work without ever attaining to its excellence, are mentioned in the Appendix. But there are two men, Antonio Maria Lausa (1530-50) and Peregrino Zanetto (1530-40), who arrest attention by reason of the early date of their activity. Both are said to have been makers of violins, and Lausa a close follower of Gasparo da Salo and Maggini. If so, how are we to account for this fact unless we go back to an influence antecedent to Da Salo?

Other  
Brescian  
Makers

<sup>1</sup> For further details, see *Gio. Paolo Maggini: His Life and Work*; W. E. Hill & Sons, London.



## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE AMATIS.

By what dice-throw of the muses—if one dare couple those immortals with man's low symbol of mere accident—that little, unimportant town of **Cremona** Lombardy, Cremona, was chosen to become the centre of fiddle-making, who can tell? Probably it had no more to recommend it three hundred years ago than it has now—viz., that it lay in the fertile and protected valley of the Po, where trade and commerce had flourished for centuries among an industrious and sober people, and where you may see the snow-clad mountains from afar, like eternal portals, closing off this blessed land from northern blasts, and withal pointing the way to heaven—and, perhaps, good fiddle-wood. But why not Bologna, that ancient seat of learning, or Brescia, known to fame, or Venice, Florence, Milan, Rome? Did the lost art of fiddle-making impose its own peculiar conditions? Was the slow, drowsy, uneventful, hum-drum air of this small commercial and provincial town the most conducive atmosphere for creating forms—nay, habitations for shapeless fleeting tone-ideals? Could fiddle-making only truly thrive where poetry and painting might have



# The Amatis

starved? At all events it *was* Cremona, because a man was born there whose name was Andrew Amati. This Andrew Amati (see Fig. 19)—a descendant from an old decurional family of Cremona—was the founder of the world fame of his little native town, being the senior of that remarkable family of violin-makers which for nearly one hundred and fifty years upheld the best traditions of their art. The year

Andrew  
Amati

of Andrew's birth is not known, but from an instrument of his making—strange to say, a three-stringed rebec<sup>1</sup>—bearing the date 1546, it has been inferred that he was born about 1520—that is,

twenty-two years before Gasparo da Salo. It is therefore surprising that some writers still entertain the belief that Andrew was a pupil of Gasparo da Salo, on account of certain minor similarities in their productions. He may have been in Brescia before he established himself in his native town. He may also have known Gasparo in riper years, and profited from the younger master—but pupil—no. More likely is it that—unless we assume that Andrew was entirely autodidact and discovered the violin form simultaneously with Gasparo—he learned by observation

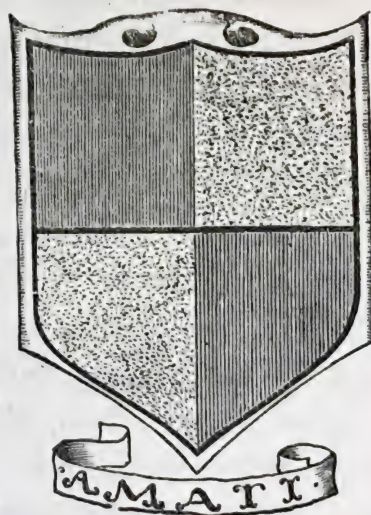


FIG. 19.—AMATI CREST.

<sup>1</sup> Fétis, *Stradivari*.



# Story of the Violin

from then already existing violins; in other words, that he took Duiffoprugcar's violins as pattern, and arrived through them sooner or later at his own original style.<sup>1</sup>

Amati's Original Style      Original (that is, different from the patterns of the early Brescian masters) his creations deserve to be called, if for no other reason than that they were of diminished size.

But the adoption of a small or medium form, with its relative, decreased proportions in the thickness of the wood and a higher arching of belly and back towards the centre, brought with it—quite independent of other details of workmanship, a different varnish, etc.—a

The Amati Violin Tone      different, a new tone-phenomenon which one might not incorrectly call the "Amati violin tone." It is a tone (generally speaking, of course) sweet, delicate, round, and mellow to a degree, but lacking in sonority, brilliancy, and carrying power.

Andrew Amati's violins are now as good as extinct, though he is said to have made many. A number of his best productions—viz., twenty-four violins, six altos, and eight basses,<sup>2</sup> were in Versailles until shortly

<sup>1</sup> At the same conclusion one arrives in the case of a fellow-townsmen and contemporary of Andrew—Johann Marcus del Busetto (1540-80), who is believed by some to have been the teacher of Andrew and at the same time pupil of Gasparo, although the discrepancy in the age of these oldest Cremonese masters and the founder of the Brescian school should, I think, convince any one of the improbability of such a relation. It will be remembered that Gasparo da Salò's activity dates from about 1560 to 1610.

<sup>2</sup> Hermann Starke: *Die Geige und die Meister der Geigen- und Lautenbaukunst*; Dresden, 1884.



# The Amatis

before the first French Revolution, 1789. He had furnished them for the Chapel Royal by order of Charles IX. What became of them no one knows.

Andrew Amati died about 1580, thus long before Gasparo da Salo. At his death his two sons, Anthony (Antonio) and Jerome (Hieronymus), carried on their father's work conjointly. Some particularly fine instruments bearing the names of the two brothers testify to this happy period of partnership and artistic co-operation.

Andrew  
Amati's  
Two Sons

After a time, however, Jerome, the younger of the two, married, and the brothers separated; Anthony working after the exact pattern of Andrew, and by preference small-sized instruments; while Jerome, perhaps the more talented of the two, chose a larger and bolder form—be it that his work was somewhat less finished in detail than his brother's. The instruments of both mark a distinct progress on those of their father Andrew—in point of view of outer form as well as beauty of tone.

Distinct  
Progress of  
Both

Anthony Amati is supposed to have died in 1635, as that is the last date to be found on any instrument of his. Jerome died 1638, six years before the birth of Stradivarius.

With Jerome's son Nicolaus, or Nicolo Amati (born September 3rd, 1596, died August 12th, 1684), the name of Amati received its greatest lustre. Some of his instruments are veritable masterpieces of the art of violin-

Jerome's  
Son  
Nicolaus



# Story of the Violin

making, and place their maker by the side of Stradivarius and Joseph Guarnerius as the third brightest luminary in the fiddle-making realm. At first Nicolaus followed closely the model of his father and his uncle in the adoption of a small form; but about 1625, by what process of thinking or experience or outside influence we know not, he created a larger model and adhered to it to the end of his life. The violins of that period are known in professional circles under the name of grand or large Amatis, and it is among these that are found the above-mentioned gems. Probably the master had worked on these with particular partiality. A workmanship finished to the minutest detail, the choice of wood, the general noblesse of design and elegance of curves and scroll, a varnish (yellowish) fiery and elastic, etc., the proportions of arching and thickness of the wood, all combine here to an exquisite total of form and tone which has hardly been surpassed by any other maker, and may rightly be called the acme of perfection in the Amati style.

Nicolaus had two sons. The younger, John Baptist, went to a cloister and eventually became a priest; the elder, Jerome, born 1649, worked in his father's shop, and after the latter's death succeeded him. He is the last representative of the name Amati in the annals of lutherie.

If the old master, as one should suppose, was proud



## The Amatis

of a name which at his time had no equal in instrument-making, and if, as one might also suppose, he had fondly hoped to see his two sons continue his life's work as did the two sons of old Andrew, one hundred years before, he (Nicolaus) must have been sorely disappointed in this (his eldest son and heir), not to speak of the younger one, who was entirely lost to the art. Jerome was not only inferior in every way to the father, but also much less painstaking and industrious than any of the earlier members of the family. He left only a few instruments, and they do not rise above mediocrity. Who knows but that an occasional tear of a sad father dropped into poor Nicolaus's varnish-pot, and helped to give those admired gems of

Jerome less  
Pains-  
taking

Mediocrity



FIG. 20.

his their wonderful gloss and hue, that they seem to look at you as with humid eyes; and many a sigh was closed up in those shapely forms which touch us now when the bow of the artist awakes them from their slumber. It is only fancy, of course, but after Nicolaus's death the prestige of the name quickly and irretrievably declines, and only twelve years later,



# Story of the Violin

Jerome, the "last Amati," died too<sup>1</sup> (see Fig. 20). Fortunately, the art of violin-making did not die with him. A number of excellent pupils of Nicolaus took care that it lived yet for another century—nay, reached its real goal with one, the most illustrious among them, Antonio Stradivarius.

<sup>1</sup> According to some writers, but according to Hill Brothers he died much later.



## CHAPTER XVII.

### A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW.

BEFORE proceeding, let us once more take, as it were, a bird's-eye view of the life and work of the Amatis. Much more strongly than the Brescian masters have the Amatis, from Andrew to Nicolaus, set the stamp of their individuality on the art of violin-making in their own and succeeding times; indeed, it is impossible to say what the fate of the art would have been without them. Though a pioneer no less than Da Salo and Paolo Maggini, unlike those two, Andrew found in his sons and grandson imitators or followers greater than himself, who carried on his work to ever greater perfection. Da Salo's and Maggini's art practically died with them, like a fine stream running dry; while the other, of the same source, and running parallel with it at first, grows as it flows.

Amatis'  
Individu-  
ality

If, in our days, the Amati violins, with a few exceptions, have lost a good deal of their former prestige, if many have descended to the second and even inglorious third rank of instruments, unfit for professional solo-playing, we must not lay the blame at the door

Reasons

for To-day's

Decline in

Prestige



# Story of the Violin

of their makers, but rather blame our ever-increasing demand for strong-toned instruments.

In this fierce battle which is being waged now between a modern full orchestral accompaniment and a poor single little solo-fiddle, where only the best of Strads. can hope to emerge victors, a weak, sweet-toned Amati has had to step modestly aside and hide under the safe and sympathetic wings of the lady amateur.

Fierce  
Battle be-  
tween a  
Modern  
Orchestral  
Accom-  
paniment  
and a Solo  
Fiddle

But it must be remembered that the tone ideal for which Andrea and his immediate followers sought expression in their productions was different from ours. In pure form and for easy handling they doubtless marked a progress from the large, inclined-to-be-clumsy model of the Brescian makers. After the large viol types current in the fifteenth century they must have appeared the very essence of grace and perfection. And the tone matched these qualities. It was sweet, soft, and mellow, and to ears accustomed to guitars, theorbos, bass viols, etc., what could have been finer and more desirable than that, to come from any musical instrument? No wonder from the first the Amati violin stood a better chance than its competitors the "Da Salo and Maggini." The true comparative merits of the latter were discovered much later.

Even yet one hundred and fifty years ago, these sweet, weak, mellow-toned Andrew and Antonio Amatis held their powerful sway over the hearts of men



## Bird's-eye View

and women. That was the time of our great-grandfathers and mothers; the time of the dainty spinet; the time when men went about in powdered wigs, and knee-breeches, and wore lace collars, and lace shirt-fronts, and high-heeled shoes with buckles, and white stockings, and the pretty ladies adorned their faces with round and square beauty spots. Music, too, was dainty then. The thunderer from Olympus was not yet born. Dittersdorf and Haydn were writing their string quartetts and symphonies, and took care that these were not too loud and obtrusive, lest Monseigneur wished to carry on a conversation to an accompaniment or doze into dreamland. It was the time of the Rococo, and was not such a sweet-toned Amati the loveliest Rococo imaginable,—translated into sound? All this has passed like our childhood, and with it also part of the prestige that once attached to the name of Amati. But the time will never come when musicians cease to admire and be grateful to those veterans of fiddle-making—Andrew, Antonio, and Jerome Amati.

The Time  
of the  
Rococo



## CHAPTER XVIII.

### AMATI SCHOOL.

MANY were the pupils<sup>1</sup> and imitators of the Amati school, as might be expected from the fame of these masters and the supremacy they exercised during four generations, and also considering how popular the violin was already by the middle and end of the seventeenth century, not alone in Italy, but in Germany, France, and the Netherlands. Four or five of even the most industrious workers could never have supplied the ever-increasing demand for instruments. So we find, at first gravitating towards Cremona and presently radiating, chiefly from Nicolaus's workshop and spreading in all directions, the best fiddle-making talent. Soon there is hardly a larger-sized town in North and Middle Italy which cannot boast some violin-maker, who directly or indirectly benefited from the Cremonese master, and in his turn perpetuated the received traditions to the best of his

<sup>1</sup> For the names of the imitators and pupils of the Amati school, see Appendix.



## Amati School

abilities. And not Italy alone, but beyond, in the Netherlands and Germany, we find traces of that influence, although any noteworthy activity in these countries, as well as in England and France, begins rather later.



## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE GUARNERI FAMILY.

BUT far above and beyond all the names of makers who were indebted to the Amatis for their skill and knowledge figures that of another Cremonese family, the Guarnerius or Guarneri (see Fig. 21). If we except that solitary great luminary, Stradivarius (also grafted on that noble Amati stock), the Guarneri may be called

the true heirs and successors to the Amati work and fame; following the latter just about a century later, so that the first Guarneri is yet a contemporary of Nicolaus, the last approaches the end of the art in Italy after the middle of the eighteenth century.

Like the Amati, the Guarneri are represented by five or more illustrious names. The talent of the father

goes down to the sons through several generations, and at an increased ratio of excellence. Indeed, the analogies may be

carried still further. The name of the first Amati was Andrea, as was that of the head of the Guarnerius

family; and like that first Andrea, the latter had two sons who improved on his work.

Here, of course, the parallel ends, inasmuch as the last



## Guarneri Family

and most illustrious representative of the Guarneri name, Giuseppe, springs by some freak of nature from a side-line formerly not connected with the art.

So much of this remarkable family in general. Its head and founder, the above-mentioned Andrea Guarneri—born early in the seventeenth century, and one of the first pupils of Nicolaus Amati (as he worked by himself already from 1650 to about 1695)—stands yet under the powerful spell of his master. He cannot get away from it except in some minor details, such as the

shape of the scroll, sound-holes, and the orange colour of his varnish, by which his work is recognised by the connoisseur. The tone of his instruments is agreeable, if lacking, like the feebler Amati products, in intensity and brilliancy.

Superior to Andrew in many ways was his younger son, Joseph, who worked from 1680 to 1730. One should think Joseph learned the technique of the art from his father, but as he copies in the beginning of his career Nicolaus Amati, it has been surmised that he, too, studied with that veteran. It is, indeed, easy enough to imagine that old Andrew, who imitated his own master so reverentially, took his young son Joseph (Giuseppe),

Andrea  
Guarneri



FIG. 21.—GUARNERI CREST.

His two  
Sons,  
Petrus and  
Joseph



## Story of the Violin

after he had just begun to learn the use of the tools, to father Nicolaus over the way, for finishing lessons and a good start in life, and to become there a greater master than he, the modest Andrew, felt the boy could become at home. Subsequently young Joseph

**Friendly Rivalry** may have sat with Antonio Stradivari, his senior, at the same work-bench, both in friendly rivalry for the acclamation of a mutually admired master.

Fétis, among others, will see in the later works of Joseph a certain leaning towards that great fellow-townsmen. That may be so or not; enough, **Joseph's Work** Joseph Guarneri's violins are greatly esteemed. They are, as a rule, small—smaller than those of Nicolo Amati, and of Andrea his father. The workmanship is very fine; the varnish, reddish, of striking fire and brilliancy.

An equally distinguished member of the family was **Petrus Guarnerius** Joseph's elder brother Petrus, who, it seems, established himself in riper years at Mantua, for most of his productions from the year 1690 bear the name of that town (see Fig. 22).

Petrus made excellent violins of a large pattern. Particularly happy, nay, almost unique he was in his varnish, which is the most beautiful red gold **Petrus's Violins** melting into amber: a sonnet transcribed into colours. If from it, and the equally careful choice of the wood, which in some cases seems to have been especially selected with the view of enhancing the beauty of the colouring, one may draw



## Guarneri Family

conclusions as to this master's character, he must have been an exquisitely sensitive and refined artist. The tone of some of his instruments matches the lovely garment of golden tints. It is of virgin purity, mellow, round, even, and also full; but, owing to the rather high arching of the belly, unfortunately not as intense and brilliant as one could wish, and as the superb outward appearance of the instrument would lead one to expect.

A son of this Petrus, also a Pietro Guarnerius, and working in Mantua from 1720 to 1750, is esteemed as an excellent imitator of his father.

A Son of  
Petrus

There is also a third master of the same name, Peter, a son of Joseph and grandson of Andrew, whose productions resemble those of his father, without, however, reaching their perfection. Last in this galaxy of names appears on the scene that of Giuseppe Antonio, cousin of Joseph, the most famous of all the Guarneri; but of him I shall speak later, as belonging to a different constellation.

A Third  
Pietro



FIG. 22.



## CHAPTER XX.

“JACOBUS STAINER.”

WE leave for a while this charmed circle of Cremonese masters on which the genius of Stradivari is just about to dawn, and retracing our steps to the early part of the seventeenth century, we wander through those snowy high portals, glittering in the sun, north to the Austrian Tyrol. About two miles from its ancient capital, Innsbruck, if we follow the bed of the Inn, we reach a small town of the name of Hall, and near there lies a little village. This is Absam, and here was born (in the year 1621), lived and died, Jacob Stainer.

“Nennt man die besten Namen  
Wird auch der seine genannt.”

Stainer's name stands, indeed, among the very best in the art of violin-making. And it has yet a sound quite its own ; a sound—how shall I say?—which seems to come through long corridors of past centuries like the distant tolling of a funeral bell, muffled and heavy with loneliness and sadness ; or, should I rather say, a sound floating—not like that of the Amatis, on wings laden with the scent of orange blossoms from

Through  
Long  
Corridors  
of Time



## Jacobus Stainer

a blessed, sunny, peaceful, Southern shore; but a sound filled with mountain poetry, grand and sad like the flight of the eagle through immeasurable solitudes, or the roaring of the mountain stream as it flings itself down the fearful Alpine precipices.

There is a touch of simplicity, originality, genius, and mysticism, and, withal, an inexpressible sadness about this man Jacob Stainer which we do not associate with any other famous maker of his time. Like no other, he has engaged the romantic fancy of poets, writers, and dreamers. His memory still Tradition haunts the wilds of the Tyrol, and forms the subject of gruesome "village" tales, and myth has strewn his grave with nightshade and with roses.

What is the truth about this unique master, this Jacobus Stainer? Until recently it was generally believed that he learned the art of lutherie at Cremona, in Nicolaus Amati's workshop, for his early productions showed a decided similarity to those of the Cremonese masters, Nicolaus's in particular. Moreover, there seems to be still in existence an instrument (or instruments?) bearing the label: "Jacob Stiner—fecite Cremonia, 1642," which, if connoisseurs had not long recognised it as a spurious imitation of a Stainer violin, reads indeed like a foreigner's bad Latin and Italian stew, and would fit in admirably as a proof that the maker was at Cremona when twenty-one years of age. Careful research,<sup>1</sup> however, in the town archives of Hall has revealed new facts and dates about Stainer's

<sup>1</sup> See S. Ruf.



## Story of the Violin

life which make it most problematic, if not impossible, that the master set foot in Italy. Who taught him the secrets of the art which had up to that time been handed down and jealously guarded by the Italian masters? Where did he acquire the wonderful skill for which he became noted in his life-time, and which placed him on the very pinnacle of fame after his death? To these questions the new discoveries fail to give an answer. Mountain streams and the song of the skylark as it rises from the dew-strewn Alpine meadows like a rocket of joy may have first awakened the creative instincts in his soul; but they did not give his hands their skill, or teach him the composition of his marvellous varnish. Nor is it any good to argue, as his biographer does, that he had opportunity of seeing and hearing Cremonese instruments at Innsbruck, where the Archduke Leopold and his wife—an Italian princess—drew to their Court and festivities many Italian musicians. Not even a Stainer by merely looking at or hearing a violin, or by opening and destroying one, will succeed in making another of such superiority as his earliest productions exhibit. No wonder then, that popular opinion invented the old version which sent young Stainer to Cremona to Nicolaus Amati; and that it also has not scrupled at investing his further life with a veil of mystery.

Some mystery, or let us say some dark page or passage, there is about that life, deny it who can. Popular opinion, though it may be much wrong,



## Jacobus Stainer

seldom is altogether wrong; and distorted truth is yet derived from truth.

It appears as historically certain that Stainer stayed in Absam all his life, except for one visit he paid to Salzburg in 1643, to deliver in person a *viola bastarda* and receive for it thirty florins, and occasional journeys to Hall and Innsbruck, where he sold his violins to strangers attracted by his reputation, or went to have a child christened or to pay his taxes. He married when he was twenty-four, bought a house (see Fig. 23)—which, it is said, stood by the roadside and was surrounded by large linden trees—and had many children. With the children (nine of them) came the cares, in spite of the fact that in 1658 he was appointed Court violin-maker to his Highness the Archduke Leopold, with the title “honoured and noble sir,” and was famous in the land and beyond for his violins. Probably they fetched but a small profit, incommensurate to the time it cost the fastidious and scrupulous master to make

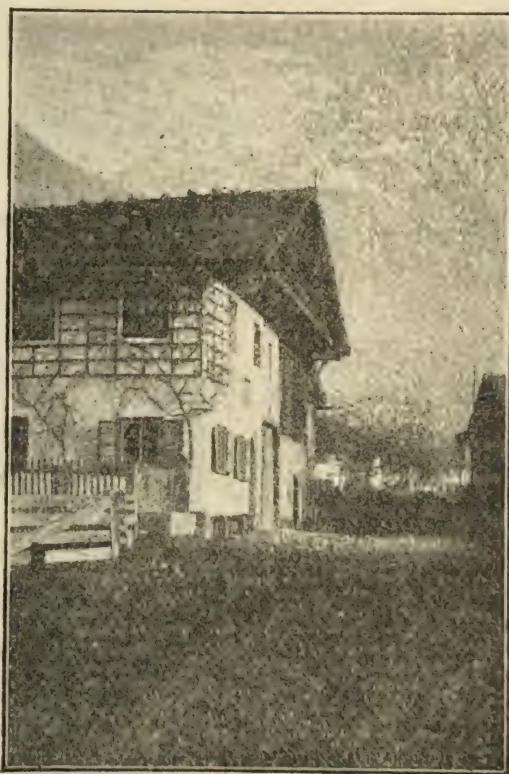


FIG. 23.—STAINER'S HOUSE AT ABSAM.  
(Copyright.)



## Story of the Violin

them. Moreover, the times were bad. Germany and Austria were only just recovering from the social and financial bankruptcy in which the Thirty Years' War had landed them.

Stainer got into debt. To further weigh down his spirits, he was accused of the crime of heresy or witchcraft and thrown into prison. Although acquitted and let free again, he was a ruined man. An appeal to the Emperor Leopold I. (the former Archduke) to acquit him of a debt of four hundred florins, which he could not gather together, failed. He became melancholy, inactive, a recluse, mentally unbalanced, and finally a raving maniac, who had to be tied to a stone bench (yet shown in Absam) in his paroxysms of violence. And so he died in the year 1683, aged 62.<sup>1</sup> Poor man! There is enough—romance one can hardly

Sadness  
and Misery      call it—certainly enough care and unspeakable sadness and misery crowded into his life to fill the lives of half-a-dozen men more fit to bear it than he was—for he was a very great artist.

<sup>1</sup> The story formerly went—and Fétis in his *Stradivari* repeats it—that Stainer retired to a Benedictine convent after the death of his wife, and there passed the remainder of his days. Here also he resolved to crown his life's work with the creation of twelve master violins which he sent to the twelve Electors of the Empire. Perhaps this was the poetical version of the poor man's desperate attempts at raising money to pay his debt, before or after his appeal to the Emperor. If true, and his failing to move the hearts of the twelve Electors by this delicate supplication be true too, it makes Stainer's lot only more pathetic, and the times to appear more cruel.



## Jacobus Stainer

Yes, poor Stainer, but for the hard-heartedness or miserly stupidity, who knows, of some imbecile official (for it is hardly credible that the Emperor himself, his former lord and patron, should have known and not granted so pitiful a request) might have lived to a good old age and enriched the world with many more gems.

If we accept as true the theory that Stainer never saw Italy, his achievements are simply marvellous. Fancy a man from childhood up, without proper instruction, in such surroundings (a little Austrian village with bigoted, stupid peasants), and then, in the face of cares and adversities, to create instruments which rank with the finest productions of lutherie!

His  
Achievements

Stainer's violins are nothing if not original. It is said that he who has once seen one can never mistake the best imitations for genuine. Remarkable about them is the arching; it is so high at the centre of the belly that if the violin is held horizontally one can see through both holes. Yet the tone is rich and full, and of a remarkable silvery purity of sweetness. As for workmanship and varnish (of a beautiful gilded hue), few, if any, Cremonese makers have surpassed Stainer in these particulars. How highly esteemed his instruments were, even in his life-time, is well known. Connoisseurs called him even then "*Celeberrimus testudium musicarum fabricator.*"

After his death the value of his violins, etc., doubled and tripled. It was perhaps this unparalleled popularity



# Story of the Violin

of the Stainer violins, particularly in Germany, Austria, Holland, and England—before many of the Value of Italian makers were appreciated at their his Violins full value—which accounts for the excessive rarity of a genuine “Jacobus Stainer” in our day.

While these Italian gems remained in, comparatively speaking, safe obscurity, stored away here and there and everywhere in Italy, in castles and convents, etc., for more than a century awaiting their release by an eager public, the Stainer violins were being constantly used and knocked about. The master must have made many in his laborious, troubled life. What has become of them? It is marvellous that any should have survived at all. Fancy all the enemies that lie in wait to destroy so delicate an organism as a violin in two hundred and fifty years of wars, persecutions, etc.: water, fire, accident, ignorance, superstition, quack-repairers—who can enumerate them? And in proportion to the scarcity, and consequent value of the real Stainer violins, they have suffered the bane of imitation. Perhaps no other maker has been imitated more, and more recklessly, than Stainer.

At first, his own pupils did not think it a crime to the memory of their master to bring their own productions (good though they were) on the market Spurious Labels with his label, and their bad example has since then been followed by many more unscrupulous makers. In consequence, as hardly one player or collector in a thousand has ever seen or heard a genuine Stainer instrument, the spurious pro-



## Jacobus Stainer

ductions that still are in the market have tended to obscure the reputation of that inimitable master. But even when the last Jacobus Stainer violin will have disappeared from this earth to bear testimony to his art, the maker's name and fame will be written in the annals of music as that of a poor martyr who helped to make this world better and brighter for a time by making matchless fiddles. The Tyrolean mountain fastnesses will guard his memory, and the eagle will tell it to its young, and pine to pine, and the winds in dark recesses will mourn the memory of Jacobus Stainer.



## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE GREATEST OF THEM ALL.

WE come now to the master whose name, like no other, spells magic to the fiddle enthusiast. Even the unmusical man in the street has at some time or other heard or read of a thing called a "Strad." (to use a rather barbarous English mutilation of a noble name), and when occasion arises makes desperate attempts at recalling the name of the man who made the thing called a "Strad." He usually gets as far as Stradi, or something ending with an *i*, expecting you, the musician, to help him out at the critical moment. Of course you do.

Stradivari, then—or, as he is also called after his Latin label-inscriptions, Straduarius or Stradivarius, with the Christian name Antonio—Antonio Stradivari was born at Cremona in the year 1644, the descendant of an old patrician family of that town, members of which occupied high positions in public service as early as 1127<sup>1</sup> (see Fig. 24). At the

<sup>1</sup> For the genealogical table of the family of Stradivari from 1602 down to 1893 see *Antonio Stradivari: his Life and Work*, by W. Henry Hill, Arthur F. Hill, F.S.A., and Alfred Hill.



# Stradivari

age of thirteen, it is claimed, Antonio made his first violin in Nicolo Amati's workshop. If this is true, his apprenticeship must have begun already when the boy's legs were yet dangling down the side of the work-bench, and his little hands barely strong enough to handle the tools. What an interesting side-light this throws on the method by which future masters were then made! It was, possibly, fiddles before breakfast, fiddles for dinner and supper, fiddles between meals and fiddles yet in the dreams, for I do not doubt but that old Nicolo was an exacting teacher.

Stradivari's general education under these conditions may, of course, have been but slight, unless the man made up what the boy missed, or the boy was as precocious in other things of learning as he was clever in those appertaining to his calling. And in this workshop of Nicolaus, which he entered perhaps a lad of ten or eleven, Anthony remained until he was a man of twenty-three or four, working under the eyes and supervision of another whom in all probability he had already reached in dexterity of hand, though perhaps not in experience, knowledge, and perception. Until then

Began  
Early



FIG. 24.—STRADIVARI CREST.



# Story of the Violin

he also scrupulously copied his master, with the result that his productions of that period went out into the world with Nicolaus Amati's label, and have only in course of time been partly identified as Stradivari's work and accordingly re-labelled.

Scrupu-  
lously  
Copied his  
Master

From about 1668 the master signed his instruments with his own name. It is possible that he had then left

Nicolaus and worked for himself, for he was married in 1667. Nevertheless for nearly twenty years after he adhered more or less closely to the Nicolo Amati style (viz., at first to this master's small patterns), show-

First In-  
struments  
with his  
own Name

ing individuality only in certain minor details; for instance, the freer shape of the scroll.<sup>1</sup> It was this wise moderation, this distrusting of himself unguided on new roads, hand-in-hand with patience that knoweth how to await its time, which allowed the flower of Stradivari's genius to grow to its full capacity. But that end attained, there was no more uncertainty as to which path to follow, no more feeling his way with him. This, however, was not until he had reached the ripe age of fifty-six.

It is customary to divide the life and activity of Stradivari into three periods. On the whole, such a division may be right; but as the brothers Hill remark:<sup>2</sup> "It is to a great extent misleading, for no man of Stradivari's genius could be tied down to act on strict lines.

Three  
Periods  
and an  
Interlude

<sup>1</sup> Stradivari's productions before 1690 have therefore been termed Amatisé.

<sup>2</sup> *Antonio Stradivari*.



## Stradivari

Broadly speaking, he profited by experience, and avoided as he advanced in age the shortcomings noticeable in earlier productions; but, notwithstanding, he made at all times throughout his life various specimens which stand out prominently above others of the same date."

I should rather say four periods: a long spring, full of promise; a summer full of hope; a rich, abundant autumn; a winter mild and short. However, three periods and an interlude between the first and second will do.

*The first* was the period of youth and early manhood; of learning, of fitting himself thoroughly for his calling; of acquiring, not only a wonderful skill of hand and eye, but also an unerring judgment and insight in all matters appertaining to his art. Then follows (till about 1684) an interval of restrained activity. Few instruments appear, and these are in the traditional style. We are left in the dark as to what went on in the master's life or in the still laboratory of his mind.

Fifteen years or so are a good slice out of a man's life, and Stradivari, of all men, would not have squandered them. What did he do? Did he continue to work, at least partially, in the pay of Nicolaus until the latter's death? Did family cares for a time suspend his labours? Was he busy experimenting while he kept the wolf from the door by work in the accustomed groove?<sup>1</sup> Or was it also at the same time an interlude

<sup>1</sup> The brothers Hill mention a set of instruments which he executed in 1682 by the order of the Venetian banker Monzi for James II., a fact which shows that he did work for himself, and that his reputation was growing.



# For Tourin Family Making Musical Instruments Is Labor Of Love

DUXBURY, Vt. (AP)—Jack traveled backward in time to the Middle Ages. Their vehicle is Tourin Musica, a family enterprise that makes musical instruments harking from medieval times.

**We Can't Wait For You  
To See Our  
NEW SHIPMENT**

OPEN

84  
84

p.m.  
nas"

Middle Ages.

Their vehicle is Tourin Musica, a family enterprise that makes musical instruments harking from medieval times.

Their workshop, a converted 19th century sawmill in this northern Vermont town, is one of the few places in the United States where one can find a viola da gamba, a member of the viol family. It is held between the knees and is comparable in range to the cello.

Tourin Musica makes music as well as musical instruments. Tourin's wife, Jeanne, a pianist and harpsichordist; son, Peter, accomplished on strings; and daughter-in-law, Tina, a harpist, perform in ensemble for schools and cultural groups. Jack Tourin tags along, lecturing on the history of musical instruments.

The Tourins also teach music appreciation to 500 youngsters a week in area elementary schools. Peter plays the viola da gamba with the University of Vermont baroque ensemble and plays country fiddle with a foot-stomping bluegrass group called Banjo Dan and the Midnight Plowboys, which tours New England.

Until Jack Tourin moved his

One is at the University of Vermont. Another one is at Yale. They are usually made for professional musicians or music

schools or very serious students of music because they are expensive.

"The reason they are ex-

pensive is that we make replicas of early instruments as closely as possible as they were when they were first made. And

all our work is done on a custom basis and it takes a lot of research in order to arrive at the result."

To make the replicas, they use photographs, read books and examine instruments in museums in the United States and Europe.

"We work from pictures we take of the instruments," says Jack Tourin. "We work from measurements we take. For example, Peter was on a honeymoon trip through Europe last summer, and it turned out to be more of a work trip in the sense that he went to museums in England, France, Austria and Germany and he took pictures and made measurement of instruments.

"We use machine technique for the non-artistic and the non-detailed operations. For example, you can spend two days gouging out part of an instrument. And you can use a drill press to help you gouge it out. So where it's not germane the artistry of the instrument we will use machine too. Where it's critical, either artistically or acoustically, we will use hand tools."

The cost depends on what you want.

"If you wanted a two-man French style harpsichord,

That's \$10 an hour.

"It isn't very much," says Jack Tourin. "That's why nobody will ever get rich making custom musical instruments. We do it because we like what we're doing. We do it because we're not anxious to make large amounts of money. We get other rewards out of our work."





musical instruments was introduced to him. He had worked for the U.S. government in Washington for 30 years. Before his retirement in 1972 he was a program analyst officer in the Department of Defense, spending much of his time rounding up Army supplies for the Vietnam War.

"My background is business administration, management, budget, financial management," said Tourin, a goateed man of 60. "What I learned about music, I learned from my son."

It was a series of chance events centering around Peter, 32, that led the Tourins to Vermont and their present trade.

Peter, who learned music from his mother at an early age, took a year off from undergraduate studies at the University of Michigan to study mathematics and psychology at the University of Munich.

"I went to somebody's house to buy a pair of used skis. They had a rehearsal in progress. There were people sitting around playing viols. And the instruments intrigued me. And the more I got to know them, the more I got interested in that style of music, small performances, much smaller than orchestra, more like chamber music, a type of performance where very often people would get together after the evening meal and play, a type of performance where composers were very often performers of their own pieces."

When he returned to Mich-



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When he returned to Michigan, he joined the collegium musicum. Then he ran into a harpsichordist who was giving a workshop. Tourin told him he did not want to go to graduate school right away, and he suggested that he help Frank Hubbard build harpsichords in Boston.

"Through Mr. Hubbard, I met a man named Don Warnock, who was a viol builder." Through him, Peter got his second apprenticeship. While apprenticing in Boston, he began going to Vermont to build a geodesic dome structure with a friend.

"And he got interested in Vermont," says Jack Tourin. "He's a skier so he asked if we would help him find a place up here to share with friends. When that didn't work, he asked if we'd be interested in coming up and I said, 'Yes,



place.

"It came quicker than I thought," Tourin said of his chance to retire. "But also, we're up here for health reasons. Both my wife and Peter are allergic to hydrocarbons, to gas and oil fumes. So between their allergies and Pete's experience up here with a friend and my opportunity to retire, it just seemed to happen."

The tourins wanted to build a hydroelectric system, so they found an old mill beside a waterfall.

"At one time in history it was called a chair mill because they used to take lumber and make what they called chair stock and send it to the furniture factories in the Boston area," says Jack Tourin.

They converted part of the mill into the Tourins' retirement residence. Peter and his wife live in a duplex apartment built within the workshops.

Because of all of the remodeling, they did not start making instruments until 1974. Since then they have made 16.

"They're essentially string instruments like the viola da gamba, but we're making other instruments that were germane to the particular period. For example, we just finished an instrument called the mandora, which is a 13th century instrument. It's the predecessor of the mandolin.

"We have made a number of harpsichords which are now in various parts of the country.



# Story of the Violin

of travelling and looking about in the world, of broadening his views and ideas, of forming connections, commercial and otherwise, in order to obtain the desired best possible material for his future work? Did his eyes perchance feast for the first time on the wonders of Venice and Florence? Did he hear in Rome for the first time Corelli draw the hidden soul out of a violin, or did the contemplation of Raphael's and Michael Angelo's master works, of the loggias of St. Peter's throw a firebrand into his soul that, modest man though he was, he exclaimed after Correggio, "Anchor' Io son artiste"?<sup>1</sup>

We don't know. Perhaps the mere suggestion of thoughts as these sounds like wild exaggerations to those who see in this incomparable master of lutherie only a simple-minded, illiterate man—an artisan at best, be it the most clever one that ever lived. At all events

**A Change in Work** about 1690 a change in Stradivari's work begins to manifest itself.<sup>2</sup> Some of the

Amati traditions are still preserved, but the form broadens out, the arching improves, it becomes flatter, the degrees of thickness in the wood are carefully determined, the *ff* holes appear straighter and nobler in design, the varnish is more highly coloured and fiery; in short, the whole instrument is approaching the stage of perfection which it reaches with the next decade.

<sup>1</sup> "Anchor' Io son pittore."

<sup>2</sup> The same authorities are of the opinion that the master was influenced in the conception of the long pattern now appearing by the violins of Maggini.



# Stradivari

*Second Period.* Stradivari creates master works, one following the other, one seemingly more perfect than the other, yet all nearly alike perfect, and that for more than twenty-five years: 1700-1725. It is impossible to touch here on the details of Stradivari's incomparable art as shown in the productions of this second period. Able minds and pens have treated this subject in a manner which leaves almost no room for further comment.<sup>1</sup> Comparing these gems with the instruments of his predecessors, we see that no item, however apparently insignificant or hidden, has escaped the master's observation and failed to become the subject of study and subsequent improvement. We see this exemplified, for instance, in his design of the bridge, which, after numberless essays in this direction by previous makers, has to this day remained the unimprovable pattern.

Creates  
Master  
Works

A Com-  
parison

How important a factor bearing on the quality of the tone the bridge is (this, at best, extraneous part to the violin organism) becomes clear when we alter its form ever so slightly. If the familiar pattern is replaced by a plain, square piece of wood, the tone ceases almost entirely. Indeed, every incision, every curve, every detail in this little marvel is not, as many think, a thing of accident, caprice, or mere ornamentation, but the result of endless, most delicate experiments. The primary object of the bridge is to transmit the vibrations of the strings to the sounding-board.

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<sup>1</sup> Hills' already-quoted work, the finest monument yet erected to the memory of the great master; also Fétis, Hart, etc.



# Story of the Violin

The same care is given by the master to the selection of the wood for his instruments. When one notices how other contemporary makers have been less particular on this point (to the detriment of the tone of their instruments), one comes to the conclusion that Stradivari possessed not only the most profound knowledge of the acoustical properties of wood, but very likely spared no trouble in securing just what he wanted.

Delicate experiments<sup>1</sup> as to the sonority of wood used by the master at various periods of his life have revealed the interesting fact that a rod of maple obtained from a fragment of a Stradivari violin of the date 1717, produced (under certain experimental conditions) the tone A sharp; a rod taken from another violin made in 1708 produced the same tone; and three rods of deal obtained from three different instruments bearing the dates 1690, 1724, and 1730 respectively, all produced the same tone F.

Nothing can be more perfect than the master's purfling. Seen through the magnifying-glass it looks as if laid in by the finest machinery invented for the purpose. The scroll, too, is a masterpiece of easy grace and strength, worthy of a Benvenuto Cellini. So are the *ff* holes, which perhaps as much as any of the many details in the shaping of the violin body reveal the superiority or inferiority of a maker's workmanship, besides their form and position being of considerable influence on the tone of the instrument.

<sup>1</sup> See Fétis's *Stradivari*, pp. 78, 79.



# Stradivari

The most striking characteristic, however, of the Stradivari violins of this period is their general shape. We get for the first time the so-called flat model. The experimental efforts of the preceding decade (1690-1700) had gradually but surely led to it. The master has given his instruments a broader waist, increased the thickness of the wood (particularly of the belly), and diminished the swelling or arching so that in the centre, under the bridge, it amounts to only about half-an-inch, while in the Stainer and Amati productions it reached nearly double this height.

Most  
Striking  
Characteristic

The result of this alteration in the general form to which all the varying degrees of thickness in the wood are most carefully adjusted is that wonderful increase in the tone which makes the Stradivari violins of the second period such unrivalled organs of sound.

There is practically in these instruments no bottom and no end to the tone—providing the tone-production of the player is what it should be. At the lightest touch of the bow this tone seems to emerge from mysterious depths like Aphrodite out of the deep still sea, and like her veil and beauty, to expand, floating and trembling on the soft waves of the air. Add to this sweetness, this mellowness, this voluptuous, earth-born, heaven-seeking beauty a triumphant strength, brilliancy, intensity and carrying power, and we have indeed the *non plus ultra* of a violin-tone, attained not before or ever after Stradivarius.

Tone



## Story of the Violin

In keeping with this tone is the varnish which the master gave to his violins. It is usually of a deep auburn-red, replete with colour, to which is lent, as its relieving concomitant, a rare transparency. It is not the pure, chaste, golden halo of morning which we see poured out over Petrus Guarneri's instruments; it is rather the rich deep red of the setting sun which has received into itself the countless joys and sorrows of a day in the world, and bidding it farewell, leaves a long train of purple behind on the sky. It is further interesting and instructive that Stradivarius, even in this period, varies his patterns in general and in detail, with the result that seldom two instruments of his are exactly alike. It may have been the quality of the wood which dictated a different treatment, or the special wish of a customer; more often, though, I believe it was the true artist spirit in him which, absolutely sure of his powers and weary of mere repetition, loved to play with difficulties. Yet though he altered the mode of expressing himself, the noble message is always the same.

*The Third Period* in Stradivari's life and work, to which we now come, is, obedient to the laws of all flesh, a period of decline. It is the late autumn in an artist's life, when the impetuous productive force of earlier years has spent itself; when work is flowing along in the broad quiet bed of habit and routine like a laden ship bearing down stream towards its destiny. Stradivarius had created his master works. But when other men have generally reached



# Stradivari

their crown of snow at three-score years or so and give up their work, he laboured on. Much of his manhood strength seemed yet in him, and he had still much to do, though in his eighty-first year. How marvellous such a life of usefulness! And for thirteen years more he was spared to enjoy the fruits of his labour: not in feebleness and enforced idleness, but by adding to them—and particularly by being permitted to impart to others what had been the glory and happiness of his own life.

With special interest, akin to reverence and half-envious admiration, one turns to the third and last period which also is the closing scene of the master's career. A venerable old man—a thin, stooping figure, in cap and leather apron,<sup>1</sup> with a face furrowed by thought, in his little kingdom (surely some small workshop<sup>2</sup>) surrounded by talented pupils watching, following, and helping the master. Behold among

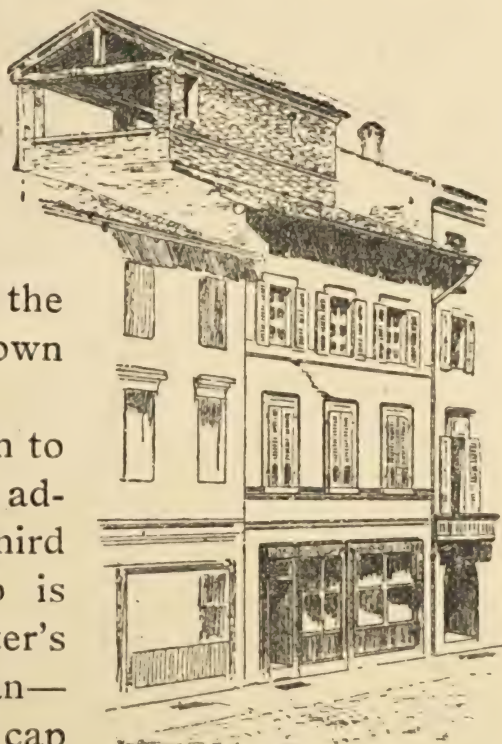


FIG. 25.—STRADIVARI'S HOUSE  
AND SHOP.  
(By kind permission of W. E. Hill  
& Sons.)

<sup>1</sup> Fétis, *Stradivari*.

<sup>2</sup> It is said that the loft seen in Fig. 25 on the top of the house served as the master's workshop.



# Story of the Violin

them his two sons, Francesco and Omoboni; Carlo Bergonzi, who—like the disciple who leaned on Jesus' breast—seemed to have understood and imi-

His two Sons, Fran- cesco and Omoboni tated the master best; the talented Guadagnini; and perhaps also, for a short time at least, the man who was almost to reach him in fame, the before-mentioned Giuseppe

Guarnerius. It is a charming scene one can thus conjure up, an idyl worthy of the brush of a Rem-

A Scene for Rembrandt brandt. This snow-haired man moving among his little flock, dropping advice into their ears as he passes them and inspects their work, and turning again with faltering steps and contented little grunts to his own bench of many years' toil, to some half-finished work.

Stradivari left off making violins one year before his death, which occurred at the age of ninety-three, in 1737. Already from 1730 his work shows more and more the effects of old age.

His Last Work It becomes timid—the workmanship loses its former absolute finish, and with it the tone of the instruments in elasticity and brilliancy; there is also in some a touching half return to the long abandoned form which he cultivated in the days of his youth, and numerically there is a rapid decrease. Some of his last instruments he probably only prepared for his pupils to finish, and these found later their way into the market under the master's name. While he lived he was most particular that no instrument except made by his own hand from start to finish should bear his label,



# Stradivari

usually as below (Fig. 26). The label of those made by his pupils (mostly Bergonzi) read either—"Sub disciplina di Ant. Stradivarius;" or, "Sotte la disciplina di Ant. Stradivarius."

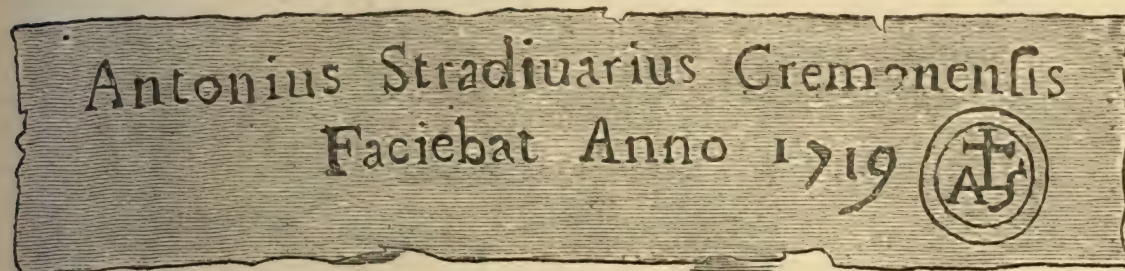


FIG. 26.

Altogether, it has been estimated that about one thousand violins are attributable to Stradivari, and about three hundred altos, 'celli, and other instruments, among them different kinds of viols, some bass viols (which at his time were yet in use in orchestras), and also some lutes, guitars, and mandoras, very exquisitely wrought. How many of his violins have endured to this day I am not in the position to say, but it seems still a goodly number.<sup>1</sup>

My readers will be familiar with the extraordinary prices which the best of Stradivari instruments command at the present day.<sup>2</sup> The master, it is said, sold his violins at the uniform price of £4 which would be commensurate to about six times that amount in our

<sup>1</sup> Hill Brothers give in their work an exhaustive list of those which have come under their notice, with names of their present owners.

<sup>2</sup> *The Violin and its Makers*, Hart.



## Story of the Violin

own time. In those days this may have been considered by him, no less than his customers, a good price, and his industry should have secured for him a nice competency. Already at the beginning of the nineteenth century prices went up in leaps and bounds, and they have gone on increasing, and will, no doubt, continue to do so until, as now for old masterpieces in painting and sculpture, only millionaires will be able to bid for them; and at last they will find a resting-place, one by one, storm and weather-beaten *Téméraires*, in the haven of national museums and collections.

I should like in this connection to vindicate the rich amateur and violin collector, who is commonly chidden because of his withholding such priceless treasures from the hands of the professional, who can put them to better—viz., their proper use. Save for such a temporary confinement, consider how few of these old instruments would have stood the continual, merciless strain and strife of professional life to which they are now subjected. I do not know whether it is a real fact, but it is affirmed that some of the best Stradivari violins have already been played out, worked to death, left a mere wreck of their former self as far as tone is concerned. I can almost believe it, for I know from experience that a violin, when played on for hours at a stretch, will get tired, and the voice husky like an over-worked singer; only rest will restore the tone to its usual brightness and responsiveness. In the plush-lined, scented box, under lock and key at the rich collector's house, these old gems take their holidays. Let us be glad for the sake of future generations, and thankful to the rich man for his selfish propensity.

The history of the master's best violins is naturally



## Stradivari

associated with the history of some of the most famous violin-artists,<sup>1</sup> and would, no doubt, make interesting reading. How many triumphs some of them (the violins, I mean) witnessed, how many thrills and raptures of pride and enthusiasm,—yes, and how many failures, too; how many heavy sighs of disappointment, disenchantment, tremors of wounded vanity and pride, or regrets at parting with them echoed through their delicate, sympathetic frames, and tear-dimmed eyes rested inconsolably on their luminous varnish.

Of the great master's home life we know very little. He was married twice, and had three sons and two daughters by the first wife, and several by the second. One can hardly imagine Stradivari's  
Home Life him otherwise than a kind husband and father, and a good, upright man in all his dealings with the world. His work is almost a guarantee for those qualities. As the gardener who spends his days in Nature's company unconsciously imbibes from her some of her gentleness, purity, and patience, so this man in the constant society of his wooden friends, I could fancy, had a conscience as transparent as the varnish of his violins, and a humour as fresh, serene, and healthy as the smell of fresh pine and maple. At least some of that happy symmetry, ease, and perfection which characterised his work must also have

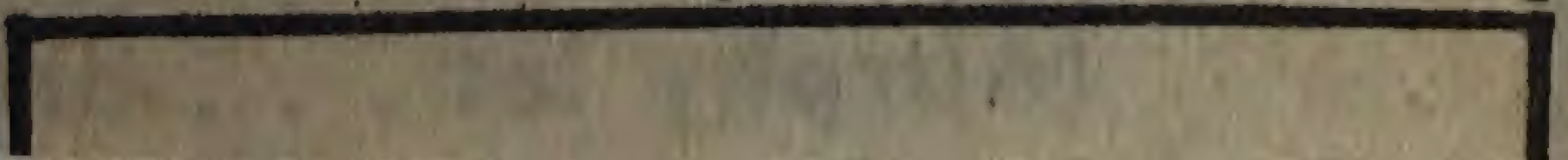
<sup>1</sup> Already Corelli, it is reported, used a Stradivari violin; likewise Viotti, Paganini, Ernst, Alard, and many others; and among modern artists, Joachim, Sarasate, Ysaÿe, Lady Hallé.



repu...

# ***Violin's Woods***

The perfect resonance of a fine violin is attributed to the wood used in its making. The silver fir of Europe is used for the top of the instrument and European sycamore is used for the back.





## Story of the Violin

permeated and regulated his whole life. Or perhaps, lest there should be all light and no shade in that life, let us say, by way of conjecture, that the good master was just a trifle too laborious, too exacting, too—whatever you wish to call it—and his wife and children, pupils, helpmates, and patrons had not always an easy time of it.

I know a clever German violin-maker whom I have visited occasionally in his workshop, and found in blue working-blouse, bent over the skeleton of a future fiddle, and somehow always pictured within myself that noble scion of Cremona two centuries ago. This man's hands are strong and varnish-stained, almost too strong and muscular, it seems, to handle a thing so delicate as a violin, to trace the slender arabesque of the purfling and lay in the threads of black wood—but watch him. It is like a mother handling her little three-months'-old baby with a firm, but ah! so tender a hand. You feel that not a move is wrong; there is no hurry, no flurry; all is so sure, so steady, so delicate withal, and quick. So this man shapes violins and cures sick ones which are brought to him, while his wife—good, devoted, and clever little woman—and a pretty daughter look after the business and the customers. I wonder if Signora and Sigorina Stradivari did likewise? They say the master was always working; surely, some one had to see to other things for him.

What noble, soul-satisfying work though, this shaping of violins must have been; more satisfying, I could fancy, than the kneading of the sculptor in his yielding, ignoble clay. It had all the healthy naturalness of the



## Stradivari

artisan's craft, without lacking the breath—ennobling, stimulating—which blows from those loftier heights where dwelleth the ideal. How delightful to work in wood on which hung yet the silent mystery of forests and the mountain-side, the echoes of distant avalanches, and the cry of chamois and eagle! And so he sat, the master—day after day, year after year, toiling from early morn when the sun first kissed the glossy boards hung up to dry by the open workshop window till the “Angelus” from the near cathedral of St. Dominicus rang over the quiet little town—making violins, violins, violins. Making violins until his own soul, like the tone of one of them, tuned to the heavenly pitch at the gentle touch of death, floated off to swell the great orchestra of souls. Antonio Stradivari died on the 19th of December, 1737.

The influence of this extraordinary man on the art of violin-making, and on musical art in general, can be readily imagined. It was an influence, firstly, through his numerous pupils and followers, who carried the precept and example of the master directly into their own established workshops and thus enriched the world with valuable productions; secondly, through the imitation of his patterns, which form the bulk of the wholesale production of violins in all countries to-day; and thirdly and last, but not least, through the stimulant which his unrivalled instruments have given to executive and creative musical art from Corelli down to the present time.

His  
Influence



# Story of the Violin

Among his pupils I have already mentioned his two sons, Francesco and Omoboni, with whom the illustrious name seems to have died out—at least, as far as the art of lutherie is concerned. Of these His Pupils Francesco was the more prominent. Besides finishing a number of his father's instruments after his death, he made some very excellent violins bearing his own label. Strange to say, and rather unfortunate for him, he created a model of his own which proved inferior to that of his master. He died but six years after his father, preceded by one year by his brother Omoboni. The three are buried in the same tomb.

To greater eminence attained Carlo Bergonzi (1712-50), one of Stradivari's best pupils and imitators, who rented the master's house and workshop, and established himself and his two sons, Nicolaus (1730-50) and Michelangelo, after him, at Cremona. Bergonzi's violins are distinguished for their large and noble tone and fine workmanship, and are consequently (since the genuine Stradivari's have reached prohibitive figures) much sought after by professional artists. Nicolaus and Michelangelo Bergonzi's instruments fell below their father's work.

Equal, if not in some respects superior, to Bergonzi's violins are those of Lorenzo Guadagnini (1695-1740), another of Stradivari's pupils, who established himself at Cremona, and helped to preserve its fame for yet a few more decades. His violins, as well as those of his son, Joannes Baptista Guadagnini, who worked at Parma (1750-85), are among the most highly-prized of



# Stradivari

Cremonese instruments of the second rank. Tone and exterior are here of equally striking perfection.

With the well-known name of Alexander Gagliano (or Galiano), who subsequently became the founder of a distinguished family of luthiers of the same name in Naples, and Francisco Gobetti of Venice, the number of Stradivari's pupils is not exhausted, and still less that of his imitators;<sup>1</sup> but I hurry on to the most eminent of all as it is believed: Giuseppe Guarneri, also called Joseph Guarneri del Gesù.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix.



## CHAPTER XXII.

GIUSEPPE GUARNERI DEL GESÙ.

AMONG the great representatives in all the arts there have been men who stood out from the rest like some fantastically-shaped peak or cone in the fine clear outline of a mountain chain; men conspicuous as much by their personality as by the originality and force of their genius; men whom we cannot altogether love and revere (because of their faults, which are as great as their powers), but from whom we cannot get away; who fascinate and haunt us, whom we admire while we pity their infirmities, and to whose greatness we surrender because we have no measurement for it. Such a man was Paganini; Turner, I think, another. Such a man was also Giuseppe Guarneri, or, as he is more often

Strongest  
possible  
Light and  
Shade

called, Joseph Guarnerius del Gesù. Comparing his genius with that of Antonio Stradivari's, it appears in its own strongest possible light and shade. There, genius harmoniously filled the whole personality, was one with it; here it runs riot, is in turn the master and the slave. The story of Giuseppe is short and sad.



# Giuseppe Guarneri

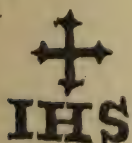
There are question signs everywhere—from the mysterious appendage to the name<sup>1</sup> by which the fiddle world is wont to call him, to the mysterious sources of his powers. For the rest, the details of his chequered life, traditional reports alone supply the much desired information, besides what the historian and connoisseur have been able to read in the problematic symbolism of his works.

Question  
Signs

Joseph, then (this much we know for sure<sup>2</sup>), was born at Cremona on the 8th of June 1683—one year before the death of Nicolo Amati—as the son of Maria Locadella and Joannes Baptista Guarneri, brother of old Andrew of Guarneri fame. Fiddle-maker's blood may therefore have been running in Joseph's veins (perchance from some unknown grandsire lute-maker), although it is not likely that his father followed the profession of his relatives, as no instruments with his label are extant. For some reason or other young Giuseppe also was not apprenticed with either of his elder cousins, Joseph and Peter, the sons of Andrew, but, if we may rely on Fétis and other musical historians, with Antonio Stradivari, who then, at the end of the seventeenth century, was nearing his best creative period. How long he worked in Antonio's workshop and with what influence on his budding talent, historians do not tell us.

His Early  
Life

<sup>1</sup>



Only from the year 1725 instruments appear with his labels, and he was then a man of forty-two. Was he established by himself

<sup>2</sup> Fétis.



## Story of the Violin

then or before? A man of forty-two in Italy at that time usually was. Surely he had made violins before the age of forty-two? What has become of them? or how were they labelled? One might here press question after question—it is all vain. Oblivion has drawn the veil across that part of Giuseppe's history.

What, then, is the story expressed in the language of curves and forms, of wood and workmanship and varnish in his works? According to Fétis, the "*first attempts* (sic)—at 42—of Joseph," "were not marked by any characteristic sign of originality, except a certain indifference in the choice of his material, in the forms, which are variable, and in the varnish."

If fancy may be allowed to interpret fact, that part of Joseph's life reads—to me at least—as follows:

**Fact and Fancy** Giuseppe learned the art of fiddle-making from some other master, be this who it may, but not from Stradivarius, who could hardly have helped influencing a young apprentice, no matter how talented, just as he influenced his other pupils—Bergonzi, Guadagnini, and Gagliano—particularly at a period when Stradivari's genius had already attained to its fulness. This granted (unless, perchance, Giuseppe did come to Antonio as apprentice and ran away from the too punctilious master, after a short time on the work-bench), it is my belief that Joseph learned from some other inferior master.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Since writing the above I find this corroborated by Mr. Horace Petherick, who states that it was one Andrea Gisalberti, who had connections with the older Brescian makers.



# Giuseppe Guarneri

Genius in him presently feels its way, but character is weak. Thus Giuseppe does not get on, while others with less talent do. His cousin Joseph helps and takes him in, and gives him work to do (the small pattern which Giuseppe cultivates at first seems to point to such a relation). So the years go by. Then Giuseppe tries to stand alone, for he is now forty-two years of age; but bad habits and his poverty are in the way, and the outcome is the nature of his work described by Fétis: bad wood and careless workmanship.

Bad Wood  
and  
Careless  
Workman-  
ship

Then comes a time, some years later, when, to quote Fétis again: "We find his instruments made with care. The wood used for the sides and the back is of excellent quality and cut on the quarter;<sup>1</sup> the deal of the belly has been well chosen; the varnish, of fine complexion and elastic quality, is of the loveliest tint, and rivals that of Stradivarius. The instruments of this period are of small pattern, their outlines are happily designed, the arching, slightly elevated, subsides by a gentle curve to the purfling, the inner parts are formed of good deal." Then Fétis goes on to speak of the degrees of thickness in these instruments, particularly in the middle of the back, which, in his opinion, are too great, and "a radical defect, impairing the elasticity, the freedom of their vibration, the brilliancy of their sound, etc." And he finishes by saying: "The stamp of originality is apparent in them [the instruments], not-

<sup>1</sup> On the two different ways of cutting wood for the use of violin-making, see Fétis: *Stradivari*, p. 49.



## Story of the Violin

withstanding the variable forms in which the artist still indulges." I may add here that this, according to Fétis, the second period is followed by a third, the happiest and greatest in Giuseppe's life, when his genius throws out gems of different form and colours as a crystal throws out rays. The violins are small and large, workmanship is perfect, the varnish beautiful in lustre, brilliancy, and suppleness; the tone rivals that of Stradivari's best productions, and over all his works lies full the charm of an originality as powerful as it is varied.

Gems of  
Different  
Form and  
Colour

And what does all this tell? What was the secret lever to this most felicitous state in our artist's work? Was it success? Yes; but perhaps it was first something else—perhaps it was first the pure, ennobling, strengthening influence of a woman's love—a loving wife,<sup>1</sup> who helped him and urged him on, who kept him out of wine-shops and pleasure resorts, who drudged for him and saved to see him succeed. He did succeed

Fourth  
Period

until—and here comes the fourth period in Giuseppe's life—"all at once," says Fétis, "immediately after this glorious period in his career, Guarnerius became so inferior to himself in the instruments which left his hands that it would be impossible to recognise his productions if the stamp of originality, which he preserved to the last in certain details, did not assure us of their being his. Poorness in

<sup>1</sup> According to a report which Fétis mentions, he was married to a Tyrolese maiden, who helped him in his work.



# Giuseppe Guarneri

the wood, in the workmanship, and in the varnish all strike the eye of a connoisseur in a certain number of his violins as the degenerate fruit of a great talent decayed." I said before, he did succeed—succeeded gloriously,—until the devil in some form or shape enticed him away from his sweet haven of love and peace, work and success, and he sank quicker than he had risen, deeper and deeper, crushing in his fall a wife already made unhappy, until he landed where as a rule only bad or very unfortunate men land—in gaol. Joseph Guarnerius in prison! One can well picture to oneself that man awaking from his sad dream of a dissolute, irrevocably spoiled life; tortured by remorse, and tortured still more by the claims of the immortal genius in him which cried for work, work; work to earn its crown—not of glory any more, but of rest. What must it have been to see the days crawl by as if on crutches, through dim, barred prison-windows; to hear, perhaps, the old familiar tolling of the bells which once had called him at eventide away from the good work-bench into the arms of love.

Poor Joseph Guarnerius! Providence sent him an angel in the form of woman: the gaoler's daughter, who takes pity on a wretched man. Enough! A touching tradition says that she procured wood for him and tools—good or bad—and varnish where she could get it cheap from any maker who had of it to spare. Then Joseph Guarnerius, with feverish, badly nourished body, set to work and made violins—ah, any kind of

Joseph  
Guarnerius  
in Prison



# Story of the Violin

violins, if only they brought peace to his mind and some little money to buy more wood and varnish for his eagerness to work. His good angel went and sold them in the street for what she could get for them, and bought the desired—and yes, with womanly tenderness, little comforts, too, besides the varnish and the wood. Thus Giuseppe worked in gaol

**The End** until one day his patron Jesus, whom he had disgraced, took tools and wood and varnish from his tired, trembling hands, and changed the prison into Paradise.

Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesù was the greatest master of violin-making after Stradivari. His best instruments

**The Greatest Master after Stradivari** are the admiration of the connoisseur, the amateur, and the artist alike—treasures of their kind, made still more priceless because there are so few. It is interesting that even

at the beginning of the last century their true value should have been hidden from the professional world, and that, compared to Stradivari's masterpieces, they commanded but a moderate price until Paganini's partiality for a Joseph del Gesù violin, which he called his "cannon," drew wider attention to their wonderful merits.

With Joseph Guarnerius's death the first-rank master-period in the art of lutherie ends. There was yet, it

**The First-rank Master Period Ends** is true, a good, large after-growth of second, third, and fourth rate makers in various Italian towns—an activity almost feverish, as if these men, possessed of the full inheritance of their masters and predecessors, had a



## Giuseppe Guarneri

presentiment that with them the art would die, and that they had to leave the world provided for in time to come. Towards the latter part of the same century, beginning at Cremona (where the art had first flowered), and spreading farther, silence slowly descended on the once busy workshops, and now the grass grows on the doorsteps and deserted streets. One by one the toilers went to their well-earned rest, and with them, piece by piece, the priceless jewels of the art—viz., the secrets of the varnish, of workmanship and wood, collected through two centuries. Or is it not so? Before trying to answer this question (to the best of an enthusiast's abilities) let us shortly consider the countries outside Italy. What were their contributions to the art of lutherie?



## CHAPTER XXIII.

### THE ART OF VIOLIN-MAKING IN FRANCE, ENGLAND, AND GERMANY.

DUIFFOPRUGCAR died in France, and was buried there. He may have left some pupils in Lyons, but his great spirit did not linger there with them. Post-haste it made for Italy to haunt the lovely valley of the Po, and visit young Da Salo and Andrew Amati in their dreams. We find no French Luthier of Renown luthier of renown in France until much later, when in Italy the art had already reached its climax or begun to decline. Indeed, if we except Nicolaus Lupot (born in Stuttgart in 1758, died in Paris in 1824), who made some much-valued violins and 'celli after Stradivari's models and rules, and a few other makers like Nicolas and François Médard<sup>1</sup> (1680-1720), Ambroise de Comble (1730-60), and John Vuillaume of Mirecourt (1700-40), whom Fétis mentions as direct pupils of Stradivarius; and further, Jacques Bocquay (1700-30),

<sup>1</sup> Henri Médard was the founder of the large violin manufactory at Mirecourt.



# Violin-making in France

Claude Pierray (1725), Louis Guersan (1760); and, in more recent times, Chanot, Gand, and J. B. Vuillaume. France's contribution to the list of celebrated makers is very small, and, then, her best ones are but imitators.<sup>1</sup> This seems strange considering how artistic and emotional her people are, and how just that art should have appealed to them in its simple charm, not to mention that France was the nursery of the rebec and viol, and the home of the troubadour. Was it perhaps the centralisation of all artistic life in Paris which denuded the provinces of just those elements best suited for following this particular art?

Contribution Small

But although France cannot boast of Victor Hugos, Alfred de Mussets, and François Millets in fiddle-making, and whatever the reason of this barrenness, she has produced a line of men who understood the art of imitation—an art, too—no doubt a very useful one—albeit fraught with danger to him who gives himself up to it exclusively at the sacrifice of originality. In this particular line French luthiers have remained almost unexcelled. It may be that it was this very cleverness at imitation which taught the French violin-makers from Médard and De Comble down to desist from all attempts at original work, that more likely than not would prove futile in the end. To this day the amateur, eager to procure an old violin, and yet not in the position to pay for a better Italian production, will most safely seek it among the

Clever Imitators

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix.



# Story of the Violin

large number of instruments left by the various third and fourth-rate French makers.<sup>1</sup> The wood is usually selected with knowledge and care, the workmanship is good, the varnish durable and very attractive in colour and tints; and, above all, the pattern in most cases is that of Stradivarius and Guarnerius.

Turning to England, we find here too some praiseworthy efforts in violin-making. We need not go back to a father and son Ross who worked in London between 1562 and 1600, and were simply viol and lute-makers; nor to one Aldred (1560), or Richard Hume of Edinburgh, also sixteenth-century viol and lute-maker. Even from a time as remote as 1578 the name of J. Pemberton has come down as the probable creator of the violin now on exhibition at the South Kensington Museum (lent by the Earl of Warwick), which Queen Elizabeth is said to have presented to her favourite, the Earl of Leicester. The arms of both these personages are engraved in silver on the finger-board, and the date, 1578, with the initials "J.P." on the tailpiece. The instrument is mentioned by Hawkins and Dr. Burney in their histories of music, but is interesting more as a curiosity than as possessing intrinsic musical value.

Of later date than this somewhat legendary maker (at least as far as violins are concerned) is a certain "Jacob Rayman," a Tyrolese by birth, who first

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix.



# Violin-making in England

introduced the Stainer models into England. He lived in London about the middle of the seventeenth century. Other makers of the second half of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth century are: Edward Pamphilon; Barak Norman (1688-1740), the best old English viol and violin-maker, imitator of Maggini; Cuthbert Urquhart, William Addison (1670), and Thomas Cole (1690), a celebrated old master.

English  
Workers:  
17th and  
18th  
Centuries  
and Later

In the course of the eighteenth century we meet with several distinguished names, chief among them that of Richard Duke (Holborn, London, 1768), who imitated the best Stradivari patterns, and also those of Amati and Stainer in a most meritorious style; and Benjamin Banks (Salisbury, 1727-95), one of the best English makers, whose instruments are justly appreciated.

In still more modern times, reaching to our day, perhaps best known are the names of: John Thomas Hart (1805-74), noted for his valuable collection of old violins and as a sound student and connoisseur of the Italian masters; William Ebsworth Hill and Sons, descendants of William Joseph Hill (see Appendix); and Thomas Dodd, justly famous for his bows, which rank with the best.

To these names, besides others given in the Appendix, representing English activity in violin-making, could doubtless be added many more,<sup>1</sup> but it would be misplaced patriotism to assert that on the whole these makers—distin-

Showing  
Originality

<sup>1</sup> See also the recent publication, *English Violin-makers*, by Meredith Morrison; 1904.



# Story of the Violin

guished though they be, and in some instances showing originality in certain details—were more than faithful and clever imitators of the Italian and Tyrolese masters. Indeed, from a pure imitation point of view, it must be conceded that they were, generally speaking, inferior to their French neighbours. Probably the climate had something to do in the case of wood and varnish, just as it has in the manufacture of gut-strings, which deteriorate in proportion as they are made farther away from the genial climate of the Gaglianos.<sup>1</sup>

Germany's (including Austria's) contribution to the fiddle-making art is also on the whole of an imitatory nature, but with this difference, which places

**Violin-making in Germany** her at an advantage over other countries outside Italy, that she can trace the origin of the art directly back to one of her own sons,

Jacobus Stainer. This Tyrolese master is truly and indisputably the founder of German lutherie, for, although it may be urged that even Stainer primarily reflected only Italian art (viz., Nicolaus Amati), he is sufficiently original to deserve that distinction. The influence of the Cremonese schools began somewhat later to assert itself in Germany as elsewhere. In Stainer's modest Absam workshop lay the sources of activities one of which has since grown into a stately river of national income and national pride. One

<sup>1</sup> Most prominent manufacturers of strings in Italy, descendants of the famous violin-maker of the same name, Alexander Gagliano. See Stradivari's pupils.



# Violin-making in Germany

might perhaps divide these activities in the father-land into three classes:—First: The legitimate artistic imitation by good sound-makers who were satisfied to copy their Stainer and the Cremonese masters with as much fidelity as possible, even to the degree of occasional slight deceptions by way of making their productions look like genuine, and in rare cases, and less to their credit, by selling them, too, as such. Imitators Second: The dabbling of cranks who could not resist the temptation of wanting to improve on the Stainer and Italian patterns, and by inoculating their own individuality produced not only deformities, acoustic impossibilities, but helped also to impair the slow-growing reputation at home and abroad of the legitimate maker.<sup>1</sup> Dabbling  
of Cranks Third: The wholesale imitation and production of instruments as it is carried on to-day in several fiddle-making centres of Germany with great benefit to the producers as well as the world at large. Poor Stainer! Did he dream that such would be his influence? Of course it was not his alone, but it was to a large degree. Of the first class, the sound-makers, we need not speak at length. Sound-  
makers Though their names<sup>2</sup> were and are legion, one or several to be found in every good-sized German or Austrian town, their reputation, with few excep-

<sup>1</sup> A few exceptions are also here to be found. H. Starcke mentions one Rauch (Breslau), who built violins after his own model, and is counted among the cleverest German makers.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix.



# Story of the Violin

tions, till now has been more or less local. With the second class, the dabblers, we can likewise dispense.

It only remains now to speak of the third activity. Jacobus Stainer had two pupils of the name of Klotz—viz., Egidius Klotz, the father (1660-75),<sup>1</sup> and Matthias Klotz, the son (1660-1720), both equally clever men, and perfect imitators of their master, as their instruments prove. Egidius died, but Matthias, when he had learned enough (he also studied in Cremona and Florence), soon after Stainer's death settled in his native town, Mittenwalde, a small place at the foot of the Tyrolese (Bavarian) mountains, where good material for his instruments was plentiful and easily to be got, and founded there a second "miniature" Cremona. Miniature is hardly the right word except in its artistic sense, for violin-making in Mittenwalde became the cradle of the wholesale fabrication of stringed instruments in Germany.

A son of Matthias, Sebastian Klotz, almost as clever as his father, and after him Matthias Hornstainer (Sebastian's pupil), carried on what soon became a large, well-paying business.

To fill a fast-increasing want for instruments yet cheaper than the Mittenwalde products, similar industries sprang up in two small places, **Wholesale Production** villages at first, on the Saxon and Bohemian frontier—Klingenthal and Markneukirchen, which to-day together produce the largest number of cheap fiddles in the world.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dates of productivity.

<sup>2</sup> Not excepting Mirecourt, in France.



# Violin-making in Germany

As already introduced by Hornstainer in Mittenwalde, the manufacture of violins is here carried on, on the principle of divided labour. The whole population practically shares in the work, from the little mite in blonde locks, who holds the mother's or elder sister's varnish-pot (for women mostly do the varnishing) to the veteran master or foreman maker and his *Gesellen*, who cut by hand or machinery the boards for belly, back, and sides, and glue them together.

It is a great fiddle kingdom which the stranger enters in Markneukirchen. The kings there—for there are more than one—are not great fiddlers or great makers of fiddles, but men who do the selling and exporting, the men of books and bank accounts. Their armies are the workers, generals, captains, recruits, and volunteers:—

Every house and hut is busy; smell of glue where'er you  
venture,

And the hissing of machinery mixing with the hum of  
voices.

Instruments are made to order from three shillings for  
the dozen

To three hundred for one fiddle; plain and inlaid, of all  
patterns,

Stainer, Strad, and Guarneri, and Amati, Guadagnini;

That's Markneukirchen on the frontier of Saxonia and  
Bohemia.

The export figures startle the imagination. I quote from a report which appeared in the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* of the year 1800 (No. 1):—



# Story of the Violin

“At Markneukirchen, worked year in year out:  
78 masters (with hands and apprentices) at violins, altos and  
basses.  
26       ”                               ”       ” violin bows.  
30       ”                               ”       ” gut strings.  
At Klingenthal:  
85 masters (with hands and apprentices) at violins.  
The minimum of violins produced in both places is 36,000.”

What may be the minimum now, a hundred years later? And what will it be a hundred years from now?

Oh! ye shades of Duiffoprugcar, Da Salo, Andrew Amati, and Jacobus Stainer! And these many hundreds of thousands of fiddles have gone to make as many hundred thousands happy (and some unhappy, too)—human beings in all parts of the globe, in all conditions of life, in the hills and in the plains, in the woods and in the Pampas, human beings on the outskirts of civilisation, in clean, bright suburban houses, and in the back alleys of our big cities! Yes, blessed be the violin and praised Neukirchen, Klingenthal, and Mirecourt!



## CHAPTER XXIV.

### IS IT A SECRET?

WHAT! making fiddles as these old Cremonese masters did? "There is no secret about it," says your modern maker of violins and 'cellos; "it is all a silly fable," and he tries to smile, to lessen what he thinks a blow to tender feelings—that amiable, grim, contemptuous smile which such superior knowledge gives—when dealing with an ignoramus like yourself.

"But the tone?" you put in feebly.

"Will be," says he with emphasis, "as good a hundred years hence as any of those gems by Guarneri and Amati."

"And the varnish?" you falter; and picking up courage when you see him somewhat dazed—"This," you point to one of his creations, "looks so dreadfully—hm—so cruelly—hm—red—hm—ugly."

Then quickly he is up in arms, and crushes you with expert weapons. "Wait," he says; "when that fiddle is played on and handled for a while, it will shine like wax. The best of oil varnish this; take my word for it, that—hm—ugly—hm—new look will rub off in time;" and so he goes on to convince you that his violins are made exactly like the Cremonese ones, and that his violins will sound less than fifty years hence



# Story of the Violin

exactly like your Cremonas, and that, in short, you are a poor fool for ever having thought otherwise. But, of course, you don't now (only you don't buy his violin just yet). You begin to believe that he must be right—until you are outside the shop, and then you murmur with Galilean obstinacy (or is it conviction?), "And yet it is a secret—it must be—after all."

Yes, what is it? The instruments of these Italian masters have been copied so that one can hardly distinguish them from the originals. Through the magnifying-glass the wood has been dissected. Splinters of it have been dried, roasted, made into a powder, steamed, soaked in water, vinegar, and preserved in alcohol; the measurements, the proportions of thickness of belly and back have been taken with the minutest care, with the latest improved instruments to the one-hundredth part of an inch—the breadth of a hair. The least detail, in short, has been made the subject of pro-

found study, but no one could reasonably affirm that the copies equal the originals. And yet there can possibly be only four conditions on which this secret, if it is one, hangs—viz., on wood, age, workmanship or art, and the varnish.

What *was* in the wood of the great Cremonese masters? I fear it was, as that certain oft-quoted painter said of his colours, "mixed with brains." Mr. Hart in his work on the violin refers to the peculiarity which the old masters had of piecing—that is, of using under

Only Four  
Conditions  
Possible

About  
Wood



## Is it a Secret?

certain circumstances small bits of wood, piecing them together (thus going to no end of trouble) rather than use a possibly inferior or less suitable material of which there was abundance. That certainly is a significant proof of how careful these men were, and how much they knew about wood as to its acoustical possibilities. How far this knowledge was self-acquired by the master, or handed down from former generations—like the wonderful efficacy of certain herbs which was the secret of our great-grandmothers—we cannot tell.

It is told of Stainer that he used to go into the wild mountain fastnesses of the Tyrol and pick out the trees, the wood of which he wished to use for his violins—usually such as had already begun to die off at the top; that further, before felling a tree (with his own hand) he would knock with a hammer against the trunk and listen to its sound—its musical soul, as it were. What did he hear? He only knew. He also, it is said, would sit at the foot of a steep incline from which felled trees were being hurled down into the valley, and listen to the tone they emitted in falling from boulder to boulder. The grand poetry of it! Like blind Homer listening to the heart-beat of the ancient world. Ah, Jacob Stainer!

It is one of the marvels in the construction of the violin that its essential parts must be composed of two kinds of wood; usually pine and maple—the former for belly (the sound-board), the latter for the back and sides. Savart, the eminent French *savant*, has by



# Story of the Violin

ingenious experiments found out that pine, as the better conductor of sound, stands to maple in the proportion of 12 to 8.<sup>1</sup> Should these old masters, with something akin to the instinct of the mediæval alchemist and astrologer, have understood more than our twentieth-century makers about this perfect mating of wood to produce the perfect marriage of sound?

We are told the Cremonese makers procured their maple wood from as far as Turkey and Galicia, where it was shipped to Venice for the purpose of serving for the production of rudders for the galleys. At any rate they got the pine or deal for the belly of their instruments (which is usually considered the most important part) from the Tyrolese and Swiss mountain slopes, where the dryness of the soil and the comparative stability of climatic conditions favoured a slow growth of the tree and with it its acoustic properties which are almost nil in wood of soft and spongy fibre. This seems very plausible, but who will pretend that the supply of similar material from those or other parts of the world, that great storehouse of nature's liberality, has ceased, or say that where Stainer found his wood two hundred and fifty years ago he would not find it still—were he to live again?

How do our makers procure their wood? I do not presume to know for sure, but I suppose in most cases from the merchant who buys it wholesale and retails it to them. At all events, I do not think they go into the mountains like Stainer to pick out the trees,

<sup>1</sup> See Fétis: *Stradivari*.



## Is it a Secret?

even if they knew one from another (as to the greater or less suitability of their wood for the purpose of lutherie), which is doubtful. Is the secret then in the wood? Most assuredly; but it is only part of it.

As the farmer sowing his seed in the autumn hopes for—nay, is sure of—his crops in the following spring, so the present-day maker of *About Age* violins expects from the future the crown which his own generation withholds from him.

It seems reasonable enough to suppose that age will improve a fiddle as it does wine; but absolutely sure—no, we are not. Nor are we sure even that *merely* playing on a violin will so very materially (as it is usually taken for granted) change for the better its inherent qualities.<sup>1</sup> The best proof for doubt on this score is furnished by some of these very gems of the Italian masters which are held up as examples.

Fétis<sup>2</sup> relates one case of a Stradivari violin having practically never been touched since it left the master's hand, and when played upon showed every quality which we admire in his other instruments. This has been the experience of more than one professional player.

On the other hand, how is it that instruments quite as old as or older than the Bergonzis and Guadagninis, etc. (leaving Stradivari and Joseph Guarneri out entirely), excellent copies by German, French, and English makers—nay, Italian ones too—do not exhibit the same or similar qualities, were age the great sole factor behind the Italian master-works?

<sup>1</sup> See below.

<sup>2</sup> *Stradivari*.



## Story of the Violin

But there is one thing (I would not like to call it fact) interesting in connection with playing on a violin. It is that a good player's playing will do what a bad player's playing cannot do; in other words, an instrument may and may not improve under certain conditions with age—viz., playing. We know nothing of the secret workings in the wood, of the tumultuous life among the molecules when the bow calls them "awake"; but it has been my experience (and I have heard it corroborated) that a tolerably good instrument will deteriorate in a comparatively short time under the clumsy, harsh, unsympathetic treatment (*tone-production*) of a pupil, and from this one may infer that the opposite is the case under opposite circumstances. Is it with these molecules of the wood when the bow moves over the string as with a sleeping camp surprised by the enemy, the millions of them scrambling hither and thither to get in line? Does a bad tone-production act on them like a bad commander, and when this is repeated and repeated does the whole molecular army become demoralised, and improve again only when there is a complete change at headquarters? At all events one thing is fairly certain: a bad instrument to begin with—bad in wood, deficient in workmanship, of an unfavourable pattern—will never materially improve with age, and just in proportion as all these conditions are fulfilled, and atmospheric and other influences are favourable, just so an instrument will stand a better chance with age.



## Is it a Secret?

The firmness, suppleness, and durability of the varnish of the best Italian instruments are indeed marvellous. Take the back of such an old Cremonese fiddle where this, the precious covering, is apparently worn away by use, and hold it against the light. There it sparkles and glitters like half-hidden diamonds. Varnish is there—nay, fire, gold, and all; they seem to have soaked into every fibre of the wood, loving it, craving it, being one with it. Then take the violin of an inferior German or English maker in the same condition. Where varnish was, varnish is no more, and *lasciate ogni speranza*—to find any. Mr. Hart, in his book already quoted, is inclined to let the varnish of those Italians pass as a lost secret. He says, by way of conjecture, it may have been quite a common commodity in Italy in the great day of Cremona, and with the cessation of the demand for it the recipe may have been lost. Hermann Starcke<sup>1</sup> remarks that it contained the resin of a certain specie of pine which, since then, seems to have died out in Italy. The resin was called dragon's-blood. I am inclined to believe that the climate and the method of applying it to the wood had also something to do with its remarkable staying power, etc., just as the colouring was most certainly an art characteristic of each maker to a more or less marked degree.<sup>2</sup> These men, from

About  
Varnish

<sup>1</sup> *Die Geige*: Hermann Starcke; also corroborated by Niederheitmann.

<sup>2</sup> On the singularly great influence of varnish on the tone, etc., see Hill Brothers' *Life and Work of Antonio Stradivari*.



# Story of the Violin

old Andrea Amati and his sons down to Stradivari and his pupils, lived and breathed fiddle-making air. Just fancy half-a-dozen or more such excellent men all huddled together in a little town, at one time no less than three of the most eminent in the same street, almost side by side. Jealousy does not seem to have existed; at least it was made obedient to the desire common to all: to create the best possible instruments, best sounding, and best looking.

There was healthy competition. When they met of an evening in the osteria, what did they talk but fiddles, varnish, colouring—shop, in other words; and every little discovery would sooner or later become the property of all, however jealously guarded at first by this or that master. Hence the comparative uniform excellence of the varnish of the Italian instruments. Perhaps also centuries back, even in the mediæval times of the first lute-makers,<sup>2</sup> it may have been discovered that a certain addition of some transparent substance, a few drops in the varnish-pot of this or that, who knows?—a secret then, yes, perhaps something of that sort—a trick of the trade, a small, lost item—gave the varnish its superior qualities.

As regards the way of applying the varnish, that surely, like all else, was a knowledge handed down, and in all cases conformable to the climate, the wood,

<sup>1</sup> According to Branzoli (*Manuale Storico del Violinista*), real varnish was applied to musical instruments from about 1400 in Italy, but became general half a century later; one of the first lute-makers noted for his superior varnish was Maller, or Maler, born in Venice, 1460.



## Is it a Secret?

seasons, and so forth. Doubtless our instrument-makers have tried every conceivable method<sup>2</sup> of applying varnish, but a child may hit on the truth which the wise pass by unheeding. A small insignificant item, observed or omitted, may make all the difference.

Not fiddle "making" but "creating" lay in the air which Stradivari and his pupils breathed. The young disciple caught the spirit as soon as he had come within the magic circle of that town About Cremona. As our future Wagners and Workman- Tschaïkowskys learn their counterpoint and ship in Art composition, with a higher aim in front of them, so they acquired all that could be taught with the ultimate object of launching out for themselves; not alone to establish a trade for themselves or to make money, but, in the better cases at least, to produce, to create, compose violins of their own individuality. And who will deny the great difference which lies between this conception of the violin-making art and that mostly prevailing in these days? Of course, like our young composers, not all of them had something new to say; not all were Amatis and Guarneris, or even Gaglianos and Gobettis. There were the talented and the dull ones, and the dull ones remained dull and became mere copyists and imitators. But it seems that the talented ones, while they were yet working with their master, were permitted to issue works with their own name. What a life-giving stimulus for work! True

<sup>1</sup> See Hermann Starcke: *Die Geige*, "A Otto: Über der Bau und die Erhaltung der Geige"; Branzoli: *Storico del Violinista*.



# Story of the Violin

art-spirit this was, such as the clever artisan these days knows not. All other conditions being favourable, it was bound to bring good fruit. Take even the productions of the second and third-rate Italian maker. They may be modelled after Stradivari or Giuseppe Guarneri, but they have their own certain characteristic qualities, their individuality; it may lie where it will, in the design of the scroll or in the tints, the colour of the varnish, it is there like a trade-mark, and by it the maker is recognised. It is the mark which original, creative thought has left. Some men, like Stradivari, were all thought, giants in their line; others were less blessed, but they seldom failed to show something of their own.

Yet this is not all. We admire the marvellous workmanship, outside and inside, of Stradivari's instruments; but where do we find the maker to-day, who, like that great master, is prepared to sacrifice years of his life to study only; who with one purpose straight before him, does not count the cost? Alas, men have no time now to squander on attempts. Life is too short, too dear. The hoar-frost of commercialism likes to lay its cruel hand on tender shoots, which pierce the surface of the soul to get a glimpse of heaven.

So silence reigns where once the buzz of voices; where joy and sorrow went in and out, there sits oblivion at the doorstep and mourns—  
**Conclusion** or clattering indifference, which is worse. Cremona, once the Mecca of a glorious art, is but a dreary little country town in which only a few people



## Conclusion

have ever heard or read of Stradivari and Amati. Similar, though not so striking, it is in other towns of violin-making fame. There are, of course, some clever, earnest workers here and there, who can make a fiddle, cut a bridge, and insert a new sounding-bar; but on the whole, Italy has fallen far behind other countries. It seems almost as if, once the crown gone, everything was gone. A king cannot go begging. Even the master-works of Stradivari and Joseph del Gesù have turned their backs on their fair native land. They are more numerous everywhere than in Italy. Dealers, amateurs, and artists go to London to buy old Italian instruments. But then, violins like mortals will go where money is, and that commodity is said to be still scarce in the land where sun, macaroni, and good cheer are plentiful. Only the manufacture of unrivalled gut-strings remains of a glory which has passed from her—fair Italy. For ever? No; who can tell but that new life will flow back once more into now stagnant arteries: that again Italy will lead in the track of her great children of the past. Already the last twenty years have witnessed a change for the better. It pulsates fresher through her veins of commerce, trade, and handicraft. National unity and the results of better education, better government, are being felt everywhere. And art is lifting her head like the flower that feels the glow of the sun. So, perhaps, also the long-departed spirit of true fiddle-making will once more return and dwell in its own native land. It will not be in the North. It will be where the joy of living is



# Story of the Violin

the people's breath of life. Not in proud, philosophical Germany, nor in smart, superficial France, nor in cold, commercial England, nor in money-mad America—but in the land of the muses: Italy, where the sun is so bright, and the air is so sweet, and the sky is so blue, and the people are so poor and contented; there, some day the old root may set on new shoots and grow as before into a glorious tree.



## PART II.

### VIOLIN-PLAYING AND VIOLIN-PLAYERS.

#### CHAPTER I.

##### PRÆLUDIUM.

CORELLI is commonly called the father and founder of artistic violin-playing. Essentially this is true, for although Gasparo da Salo and Andrea Amati had lived and died, and violin-playing in consequence had been carried on long before Corelli was born, there is no predecessor or contemporary of the Italian master who could reasonably lay claim to the same distinction.

Father and  
Founder of  
Artistic  
Violin-  
playing

It was Corelli who raised "fiddling" to the dignity of an art by the side of other reproductive arts; who first (in his own land at least) freed it from mediæval tavern and trampdom reminiscences, and the fiddler from the unsavoury reputation of quackery and trickery and smelling of strong drinks which hitherto had clung around him like wet clothes around a swimmer; and who made a place for him on one of the back benches in Olympus. It was Corelli who, by the



# Story of the Violin

purity and modest grandeur of his style, unlocked the door of the church to a young art, and gained for it a powerful and generous friend and patroness. It was Corelli, before all, who created a style of composition for the new instrument at once appropriate to its nature and full of future possibilities—a style which, nurtured and impregnated with the best art traditions of a Palestrina and Gabrielli, formed a sure and broad foundation for the lofty structure which it was the privilege of future masters of the violin to erect on it.

But artistic violin-playing, of which Corelli is indeed the radiating point for all future development, is after all only the child of something else, whatever it be, preceding it as the leaf and bud precedes the flower; and if we would trace that something—call it what you will, fiddling, viol or rebec playing, street-fiddling, anything at all—to its beginning, we have to take another long journey back through mediæval times. There, like a landmark, I see a hand raised out of Poor Char-  
millon a long-forgotten grave! It is poor Char-  
millon's, king of ribouds. "And I?" it says; "I am Jean Charmillon's, king of ribouds: has an ungrateful world forgotten me? I played the fiddle too." "And I!" "And I!" I see hands starting up all over France and Germany and England, Hungary and Spain; North, East, and West, beyond the Danube and the Vistula, thousands of them. Poor fellows, who all played the fiddle well, they thought, and cannot sleep



## Præludium

in peace, it seems, because of Corelli's fame. Or is it because of the musical historian?

I fear that honest searcher after truth, the musical historian, has not a very high opinion of poor Jean and his fiddling, wandering brethren of the craft. A musical historian, you see, my dear Jean, wants proofs, evidence, etc. What a noble King of France thought and said and made of you in 1235 is of no account to him. Evidence of your abilities is wanted, and evidence, most unfortunately, is missing.

While many specimens of the poetry of the times exist—chansons in the soft euphonious French of Provence, charming in form, feeling, and grace of language, and veritable gems of the minnesängers, Walter von der Vogelweide, Heinrich von Ofterdingen, Wolfram von Eschenbach, and others—there is not one small item, not one little scrap of a musical manuscript, a dozen notes or so bearing testimony to the worldly music of the times. Nor had they press-reporters, critics, interviewers in those days. The monks, who mostly did the writing, and faithfully chronicled prayers, parish gossip, and historical events, did not think it worth their while to record the half-mad doings of those incorrigibles, the minstrels and jongleurs.

Instrumental  
Music of  
the Time

Now, in the absence of all other evidence, the musical historian has seen fit to draw his inferences as to the abilities of those fiddlers *à la* Charmillon: on the one hand, from the standard of theoretical music at the times; on the other, from the nature of their instruments



# Story of the Violin

so far as we can judge of them by means of illustrations, etc. But are such conclusions really fair, and above all, are they infallible? Would they be considered so to-day? Can the contrapuntal

Contra-  
puntal  
Gropings  
no safe  
Criterion

gropings and meanderings of the early theorists (who seem to have had any amount of brains but no ears) possibly be taken as a criterion for the merry music-making of the wayfaring man,—blessed perhaps with somewhat muddled brains, but ears sharp and open, to be sure, for that which pleased their fellow-men and brought coppers into their cap? What conclusions as to the possibilities of the violin can the uninitiated draw by seeing the little, curious-looking object in the shop window? Can he possibly imagine from its form

Nor Illus-  
trations of  
Instru-  
ments

the wondrous beauty of its voice, or do four strings suggest the uncanny dexterity of a Paganini? Nor can we judge by the illustrations (mostly bad ones too) of a rebec or geige what feats a king of rebecca-players might have been able to perform on it.

This Jean Charmillon, like others of his class, very likely was engaged as jongleur in the suite of some fine troubadour at first, his duty to accompany his master's song, and in odd intervals give extra proofs of his dexterity. Does any one seriously think he stood before his king, before the lords and ladies of the court, and held out notes or played unsingable contrapuntal balderdash, and was he for that created king of ribouds? No, not he. To charm his king,





FIG. 26a. —MEISTER HEINRICH WRÖWENLOB (FRAUENLOB),  
FAMOUS MINNESÄNGER, 13TH CENTURY.





1960.  
Traces  
Los Du Pas  
Riviera



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## Præludium

Jean Charmillon played dances, pretty tunes, tricky little runs, and other things, while he used his bow and fingers well. So we—although, of course, it must remain entirely a matter of conjecture—believe that in many instances the wandering man's attainments were not of so low an order as is commonly accepted.

The general standard of music, even in the romantic age of song (of which I now speak), may have been low; even the then much-praised singing of the troubadours and minnesänger may have had little to recommend it to modern ears; and as for church music, we know that two more centuries had to elapse before Dunstable and Dufay, and the Netherland composers, appeared on the scene: but what of that? Have we not examples of a musical irresponsibility such as these wayfaring men represented in the gipsies of to-day? What daring, what bewildering talent in some of these nature's musicians! Surely many of Jean Charmillon's fiddling brethren, like the gipsies, had music running in their veins like blood; they could not help it, no more than the bird can help singing. Give such a born musician the most wretched of fiddles and he will yet make it sing. Give him a rebec or an antediluvian viol and he will not be long discovering and bringing to light its hidden resources. What possibly could have been these resources? It has been pointed out by the historian that on nearly all representations of mediæval fiddles, rebecs, and viols the bridge appears (if it does at all appear)



# Story of the Violin

perfectly flat. But look at the representations of men and women's faces and figures at about the same period, the almost laughable inaccuracies in the drawing: here, a head which stands almost horizontally to the neck; there, fingers as long as the face and feet. Can we then expect miniature, etc., illustrations of instruments with which monks adorned their manuscripts, etc.—of instruments which require some technical knowledge to be understood—to be more accurate in the drawing? I don't believe that musicians could have used flat bridges for centuries when it was just as easy for them to cut a bridge round, and a rounded bridge gave them an opportunity of sounding each string separately—for centuries, I say, in the light of reason is such a thing possible? Yet supposing it had been, I know of few more charming effects on the violin than those produced musette-fashion: one open string (muted if you will) held out while the melody is simultaneously sustained on the string above or below.

We find these effects largely in music of the primitive kind. Doubtless they were among the first discovered

Music of the Primitive Kind on bowed instruments, on which alone they are possible, if we except the bagpipe and, of course, the organ. They are suggestive of the inner life of Nature—suggestive of the buzzing of her countless insect life, her brooding and falling asleep amid contented murmurings, like a tired child on a hot July afternoon—primeval sounds of the big soul of Nature which the



## Præludium

inner (and outer) ear of the musician caught and never let go again. They are yet largely used as bass continuo, or lying bass effects, etc., in modern compositions, and formed the basis of the many unmistakable attempts at legitimate tone-painting or colouring by the early Italian violin-masters.

So, again, although on the whole fiddle-playing in the earlier Middle Ages was possibly primitive to a degree not much exceeding the rendering of a dance tune, slow or lively, and some feeble attempts at descant after the manner of the *faux bourdon* of the church singers.<sup>1</sup> Possibly in some cases it attained to—for the times—a startling technical development.

It is often cited that the use of the positions dates from a very much later time. If that were true, which is by no means proved in the case of rebec-players, what a variety of effects with bow and fingers can be produced even under such limitations. The voice seldom soars beyond B and C above the staff, and the world of song is practically unlimited.

So much about the possible abilities of Corelli's earliest fiddling predecessors. I may add yet that, as we see depicted on Fra Angelico's picture of the angel with the rebec, the rebec, in some cases at least, was held much like our violin—that is, above the breast, near the neck. Such a position indicates the comparative ease with which the instrument must have been handled, thus encouraging daring technical feats, and

<sup>1</sup> "*Faux bourdon* was first introduced in France by French minstrels."  
—Dr. Heinrich Köstlin in *Geschichte der Music*.



# Story of the Violin

quite different from the method required for the heavy, clumsy viols of a later time, which were held either against the breast or between the legs like the violoncello, or also played like our double-bass. It also seems to point to the important part the rebec played in the invention of the right, present, graceful size of the violin.

Probably more accurate is the estimate of the musical historian as to the abilities of the violist of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The very

Fiddle  
(Viol)  
Playing in  
the 14th  
and 15th  
Centuries

number and character of the instruments, and the uses to which they were put sheds light on this subject. And of particular significance seems to me the almost uniform appearance of frets on instruments of the viol kind—a proof, if one is wanted, of their respectability. Want of daring, sticking to rule,

Symbol in  
the Frets

jealous suppression of any sign of originality, solidity formed the chief characteristics of the art and craft achievements in the Meister-singer period—we find their symbol in the frets.

The "Eselsbrücke," as a later writer calls them, must have limited the technical output on the viols, if I may say so, to its minimum. It was altogether too sure going to admit of originality, of striking out on new discoveries technically, such as the rebec had permitted.

So to sum up, while the irresponsible minstrel of the romantic age—that wild, thorny briar-rose by the way—



## Præludium

side—was on the whole perhaps an inferior musician compared to the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth century town treble and bass violist who knew his notes, and on Sundays accompanied the singing in the churches, and did other laudable and respectable services—he of the Jean Charmillon kind was superior to him in invention, daring, and all-round fiddle genius; and no wonder, for he drew his inspiration

“From the birds in the trees and the clouds in the skies,  
And the tears and the smiles in my fair lady’s eyes.”



## CHAPTER II.

### VIOLIN ART IN ITALY.

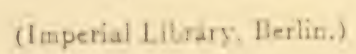
THUS, along many a circuitous path—through barren stretches, sandy wastes, past lovely fields and meadows, villages, and towns—went fiddle-playing through the centuries, until it reached the foot-hills where Corelli stood and showed the way to greater and sublimer heights, mounting into the clear sky of the last ideal. The violin had been invented, and soon after, from its native land, some early birds of passage, minstrel-like again, carried its message into Germany and France.

Only a few names of violinists belonging to the sixteenth century, contemporaries of Duiffoprugcar, Andrew Amati, Gaspar da Salo, etc., have  
Sixteenth  
Century come down to us. Gerber<sup>1</sup> mentions one Albert as among the most celebrated violinists<sup>2</sup> in Italy, whom François I. took with him to France in the first half of the sixteenth century; and Alessandro Romano, a monk with the designation “della Viola.” In the second half of the century, according to Branzoli, we find Giuliano Tiburtino and Luigi Lasagnino both hailing from Florence and famous in their day; and particularly Baltazerini, called “Le Beau Joyeux” (born 1550), the best violinist of his time, who, in 1577, was

<sup>1</sup> *Ton Kunst-lexicon.*

<sup>2</sup> Probably *violists*.











## Violin Art in Italy

presented to Catherine de Medici, and subsequently appointed, first, as her premier valet-de-chambre, and then primo cavaliere and superintendent of music in Paris. He is considered the founder of the heroic ballet in France.

By the time Biagio Marini (born at Brescia, second half of sixteenth century, died 1660, at Padua) and, still better known, Carlo Farina (in 1626, violinist to the Elector of Saxony) appear in the annals of musical history the fame of the violin had surely been carried far and wide. Musicians in Italy and elsewhere who hitherto perhaps had cultivated the treble viol, took up instead the new instrument, which offered a much greater scope, and amply repaid the greater labour involved in learning it. Representations of the violin in its perfect Amati and Brescian form in many pictures of the great Dutch painters<sup>1</sup> go far towards proving how widely known and popular the lovely instrument was long before Corelli appeared.

First Half  
of Seven-  
teenth  
Century

Towards and after the middle of the seventeenth century, therefore partly contemporaries of Corelli, we find in Italy among other violinists of less renown: Giuseppe Torelli (died 1708), who is said to be the inventor of the concerto; Antonio Veracini, uncle of the celebrated rival of Tartini, and presumably his teacher; Farinelli, uncle of the great singer of the same name, concert-master

Second  
Half

<sup>1</sup> Among others, Gerard Dou's (1613-75) celebrated picture in Dresden, "Der Geigenspieler."



## Story of the Violin

at the Court of Hanover, and knighted by the King of Denmark; Bartholomeo G. Laurenti (1644 in Bologna); and Battista Fontana (born 1641 in Brescia). Further: Tommaso Vitali, of Bologna (born 1650), an artist whose achievements as violinist and composer for his instrument must have been, for the time, quite extraordinary, if his "Ciaccona" may be regarded as a criterion; and Giov. Batt. Lully (born 1633 in Florence), who came to Paris early in life, and worked himself up from a position in the kitchen of Mme. de Montpensier to that of a favourite at the Court of Louis XIV., an interesting figure in French musical history.

With Arcangelo Corelli (1653-1713) we come at last to the man in whose art appear focussed all the violinistic achievements of preceding ages and his own time. Violin-playing leaves the stages of irresponsible childhood; it starts life in earnest—it comes of age.

Corelli was born in Fusignano, a little town in the district of Bologna. The elements of music were taught him by the papal singer, Matteo Simonetti. His teacher on the violin is said to have been Bassani,<sup>1</sup> then capellmeister at Bologna. In the year 1672 we find the master in Paris on his first concert tour, but Lully's jealousy or the great Louis' indifference to any other but his favourite's music soon drove him away again. He subsequently entered the services of the Elector of Bavaria, and remained in Germany until 1681, when he

<sup>1</sup> As Corelli was four years the senior of Bassani, it is not clear how he could have been the latter's pupil.



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Detto il Bolognese.

O P E R A P R I M A.



BIBLIOTHECA  
LANDSBERGIANA.

IN ROMA, Per il Mascardi. 1685. Con Licenza de' Superiori.

FIG. 28.—TITLE-PAGE OF CORELLI'S OP. I.

(Published in Rome, 1685.)

(Imperial Library, Berlin.)







## Violin Art in Italy

returned to his native land and settled in Rome for the rest of his life. In Rome he died, idolised by his countrymen, and is buried—not far from the ashes of the divine Raphael—in the Pantheon, that ancient temple dedicated to the pagan deities and transformed into a Christian church. A marble tablet marks the place.

It appears like a coincidence of poetical significance, or a proof of the eternal fitness of things, that Rome should have been the cradle of modern violin art; in other words, that both the spirit of the classic past and the spirit of a living Christian faith should have stood as godfather to Corelli's genius. Considering what intimate connection exists between a man's work and his surroundings, who knows whether Corelli in Naples or Florence would have been the Corelli he became in Rome? At all events, from Rome—that is, from the Roman school of violin-playing of which Corelli was the founder—issued the influences which were subsequently felt as powers all over the world, and it is no exaggeration to say that there is hardly a violinist of note to-day who in some way or other may not trace his violinistic genealogy back to the great, gentle, and modest master.<sup>1</sup>

The  
Roman  
School of  
Violin-  
playing

Corelli's artistic activities may be equally divided into playing, teaching, and composing music. It is difficult to say in which of these his influence was strongest and of most lasting benefit to his own and future violin-

Artistic  
Activities

See Appendix.



# Story of the Violin

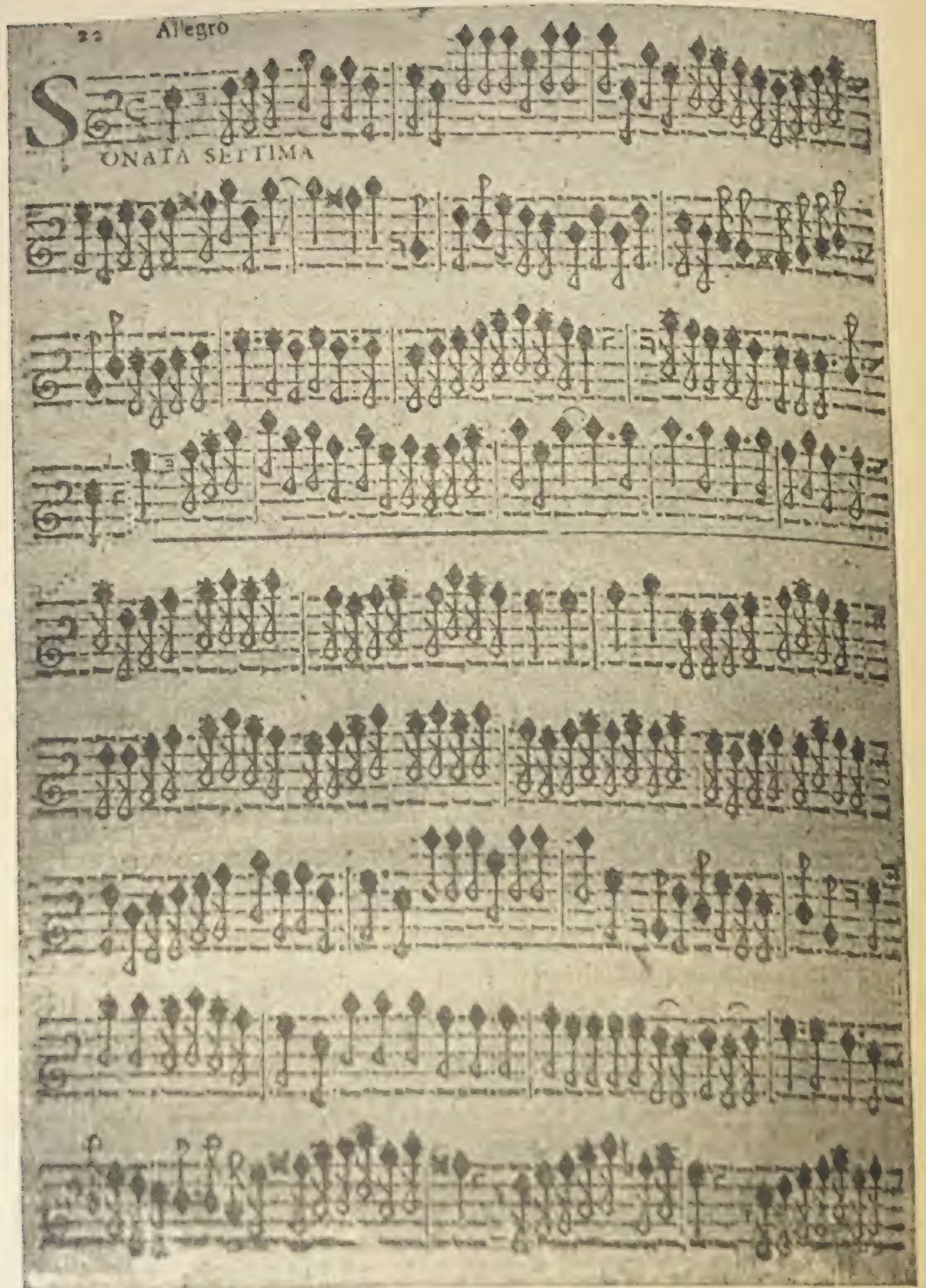


FIG. 29.—VIOLIN PART OF CORELLI'S SEVENTH SONATA.  
Imperial Library, Berlin.



## Violin Art in Italy

playing generations. Of his work as composer I hope to speak more at length in the third part of this work. If time is the touchstone of merit, if two centuries of rubbing has still left enough gold in his compositions for our age to enjoy and profit from, to Corelli the composer belongs the palm; but a more immediate force for good was perhaps his playing and teaching.

The admiration which his playing elicited strikes us now as almost fantastic. Expressions like: "Princeps musicorum," "Maestro di maestri," "Virtuosissimo di violino," and "Vero Orfeo di nostri tempi," etc., which were current in his life-time, speak with sufficient eloquence, and they found their consummation in the monument erected to his memory. To a large degree his compositions may be said to reflect the characteristics of his executive art. It was distinguished by beauty and purity of tone, and tenderness and sympathy of expression rather than display of technique. In this respect some of his contemporaries (Vitali, for instance) were probably superior to him; but it is to Corelli the teacher we turn with particular interest.

His  
Playing

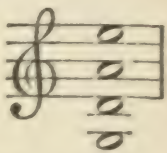
The  
Teacher

A master's pupils are the children to whom he leaves a legacy. They share in it, great or small, though not of even parts. The lucky ones get much, those favoured less get less, but all will carry with them into life a little of the master's soul and goods. Corelli's reputation could not help attracting youths who had been fascinated by the charms of the new instrument or by the hope—so fond of youth—to glitter brightly in this



# Story of the Violin

world. Youth, to be sure, soon flocked to Rome from far and near to profit from the master's art; even from Germany and France they came with fiddle and with travelling bag.

Not all these aspirants to fame's hand reached that most evasive goddess. Many a youth most likely stayed in Rome, and after a time went home again, there to nurture fond and sad memories. Perhaps also many a one did later unsung pioneer work somewhere in distant parts, carrying the sweet voice of the violin where it had not yet been heard, thus unconsciously swelling the mysterious chord of  which still sweeps the world undissolved. But even fame is too often a flame which flickers brightly for a time and then dies out. So of

**His Pupils** Corelli's many pupils, only a few have left not only names but also a trace behind. They are Somis, Geminiani, and Locatelli, and less known, Baptiste Anet (see *Violin-playing in France*), and Pietro Castrucci, interesting on account of his connection with the Italian Opera in London in Handel's time.

Giovanni Battista Somis (1676-1763), the first, oldest, and most conspicuous of Corelli's pupils, studied later also with Antonio Vivaldi at Venice. The characteristic art-traits of both his masters he tried to embody in his work. As founder of the Piedmontese School of Violin-playing at Turin, he played a very important part in the further development of the art, his best pupil being Pugnani, who in his turn became the master of Viotti.



## Violin Art in Italy

Francesco Geminiani (born in 1680 at Lucca, died in 1762 at Dublin), a violinist with great talents and attainments, is particularly well known to English music lovers, as for a considerable time he stamped London musical life with his artistic individuality, and greatly stimulated violin-playing in England. Besides a number of compositions for his instrument, over the merits of which the opinions of musical critics differ, he left a substantial and lasting claim to the gratitude of posterity in his *Method for Violin-playing*,<sup>1</sup> the first one of its kind, published in London in 1740. Through Geminiani was thus perpetuated Corelli's teaching and a theoretical basis given for the art of violin-playing.

In Pietro Locatelli (born at Bergamo in 1693, died in Amsterdam 1764) we meet with an interesting and conspicuous figure in the annals of the art by reason of the influence he had on the development of violin-technique.<sup>2</sup> He may be said to have sown the seed from which sprang in time, under the sunshine of public favour, that singular growth of executive art: virtuosity.

<sup>1</sup> "The *Art of playing the Violin* containing rules necessary to attain perfection on that instrument."

<sup>2</sup> To appreciate Locatelli's unique—I had almost said, grotesque—position in the art of violin-playing, I refer the reader to his *L'Arte del Violino*, consisting of twelve concerti and twenty-four capricci ad libitum.



## CHAPTER III.

### VIOLIN ART IN ITALY (*continued*).

BESIDES the Roman and Piedmontese schools of violin-playing—each more or less distinguished from the other by the art-characteristics of their founders—  
**Other Centres** other smaller centres sprang up here and there in Italy.

Already before and during Corelli's life-time, Bologna, Florence, Bergamo, etc., had distinguished themselves by giving birth to violinists of talent and by fostering the young art. From Bologna, we have seen, hailed Laurenti (1644-1726), Bassani (1657-1716), and Vitali; from Florence, the older Veracini; from Bergamo, Carlo Antonio Marini, etc. Corelli's influence had further stimulated the keen interest and activity in violin-playing all over Italy. Men and women learned the lovely instrument. Amateurs rivalled professionals in playing and composing for it, and the Church, like a good mother (be it with an eye not oblivious of her own glorification), lent everywhere a helping hand to spread its use and joy.

Some of the larger churches were genuine nurseries of instrumental music; St. Anthony at Padua in Tartini's time, for instance, employed no less than sixteen



# Violin Art in Italy

singers and twenty-four instrumentalists. Also, as a solo instrument the violin was employed in connection with the Mass ceremonies, and this gave eminent soloists not only an opportunity of displaying their talents under most favourable conditions and nobly stimulated their efforts, but many of them found honourable, congenial, and

The  
Churches

fairly lucrative positions. No wonder, then, new centres, as I said, sprang up, and old ones added to their laurels. We find in Venice Antonio Vivaldi (1660-1743), priest, violinist, and famous composer; and in Florence, besides Giuseppe Valentini and Martinello Bitti, Francesco Maria Veracini (1685-1750), one of the most eminent of the eighteenth century Italian violinists, who also played an important part in the life of the man to whom we come next—Giuseppe Tartini, the founder of the Paduan school of violin-playing (Fig. 30).

There is no artist in the earlier stages of violin art who has so firmly and deeply carved his name in the



FIG. 30.—TARTINI.  
Imperial Library, Berlin.



## Story of the Violin

slippery metal of man's memory. Born at Pirano, a little place in Istria, on April 12th, 1692, he received a splendid education, and by way of recreation was taught the elements of music and the violin. By whom the latter is not known; Giuseppe Tartini presumably it was a priest, one of the Padri dalle Scuole Pie at Capo d'Istria, where Giuseppe went to school; one of those modest, patient mediocrities, sowers of small seed, who by the grace of God sow greatness once in a while. At the age of eighteen Tartini was sent to Padua to study law, but fortunately the current of his life was turned into another direction. After an adventurous and stormy youth of melodramatic flavour (a secret marriage, flight, hiding in a cloister, discovery, etc.), Tartini became eventually the greatest violinist and violin composer of his time. Essentially he was his own teacher. Of great influence on his development, however, was Veracini, whom he heard in Venice on the occasion of a contest<sup>1</sup> which had been arranged between the two artists. Tartini was so impressed by the superiority of his rival's playing that, without so much as crossing swords, he quitted the field and retired (then a man of twenty-four) to Ancona for further study. The outcome of this was the wonderful command of the bow and the technique of the left hand for which he became noted.

<sup>1</sup> Public contests—artistic tournaments, in other words—between violinists were quite a common occurrence in those times; not seldom the very sacred precincts of the church were chosen as the arena for the combatants.



Mio caro, e stimato figlio

Padova li 31 Aprile 1764

Non può immaginarsi abbastanza la consolazione che me procurate  
nel vedere dalle altrui relazioni, e dalla di lei lettera il felice incontro  
de' vostri hanno avuto e la sua persona, e le sue compagini ap-  
presso S. A. R. E. Prince, ed appresso questa Corte. Restano però le  
ed io si ringrazia la divina Provvidenza per una condotta di particolare  
ordinata alla salute del di lei stato, e condizione, per di lei salute  
e per la mia a premiarvi anche in questo Mondo con una mercede  
di maggiore di tutte, qual è la consolazione di aver fatto la vostra  
come di ciò io rendo a Dio grazie di cuore, e di faccia l'istesso  
per tutto il tempo di sua vita, ricordando sempre di esser costante  
grazie ad una sì divina Provvidenza, e di aver per un cortale  
attenzione a di lei via interiore, che sentendo che si saranno alcuni  
anni, o per tempo. Sapevo ella con l'istesso costume, e con l'atti-  
tudine dello studio corrisponde quanto mai più alla dignità e demerito  
della sua vorana facoltà, e meriti con tutte le sue forze di  
mentre sempre più merita delle di lei beneficenze, a dare nel po-  
tente di vista che mi vesta in vecchiaia, e vederla nuova sempre  
migliori della di lei persona, e quali mi faranno sempre ragione  
di nuova allegrezza, e contento. Con questa occasione le prego  
di darmi qualche notizia dello stato di salute del signor Huet,  
a cui porto per me i miei cordiali complimenti, ed affez-  
zati come faccio vece di, di cui sempre più mi confermo, e ringrazio  
di V. S. Mio figlio

Da  
M. D. Antonio Tartini  
Giuseppe Tartini

FIG. 30a.—FACSIMILE OF A LETTER BY TARTINI.







## Violin Art in Italy

Tartini's life henceforth ran smoothly. Except for one prolonged visit to Prague (1723-26), he stayed in Padua, where he was engaged at the beautiful church of St. Anthony. In Padua he died, full of years and honours—"Il maestro della nazione," as his compatriots significantly called him—on February 26th, 1770, and was buried in the Church Santa Catarina. His memory has been not less honoured by his countrymen than Corelli's, in an abiding way by a statue erected to him—among the statues of other noted men connected with Padua's famous old university—in the little park lying outside the town, the Prato della Valle.

In dealing with Tartini's life-work and its importance for the art of violin-playing, I have again to defer the subject of his compositions, which here stands out pre-eminently, to the third section of this work. A few remarks, however, I can hardly refrain from making now, as they throw additional light on the master's personality. Who among music-lovers has not heard of the "Trillo del Diavolo," or devil's trill? The very name is coupled with Tartini's fame, and helped to its perpetuation. Like a self-feeding monster, feeding the master's fame as well, and giving food for countless stories in the nurseries of fiddle-land, so this name "Trillo del Diavolo" has lived for more than one hundred and fifty years, and is as fresh as ever. It raises yet the future Paganini's hair; the little tot of ten or twelve, he smells the sulphur (no mistake) and sees the bluish flames rise from some imaginary "Strad" (his own three-quarter



# Story of the Violin

fiddle being yet, he knows, too small for mine host Mephistopheles).

And the story of this shake of the devil? I give a translation of it as it is claimed to have come from the master's own lips:—<sup>1</sup>

"One night (it was in the year 1713)<sup>2</sup> I dreamed I had sold my soul to the devil. Everything was at my command, my new servant anticipated every one of my wishes. Among other ideas, it struck me also to give him my violin to see if he would be able to play something nice on it. But how great was my surprise when I heard a sonata, so wonderful and beautiful, and rendered with so much art and intelligence that not the highest flight of fantasy could have hoped to reach it. I was so entranced, delighted, and enchanted that the breath failed me and I awoke. Immediately I seized my violin in order to retain at least a portion of the tones heard in my dreams. In vain. Although the music which I composed then is the best I ever made in my life, and I call it yet the devil's sonata, the difference between it and the other which so moved me is so great that I would have broken my instrument and renounced music for ever if I had been able to deprive myself of the pleasure it afforded me."

The strange part about this story is that Tartini seems to have been perfectly convinced of the reality of his dream. It is told by Gerber that he had the manuscript of the devil's sonata hanging over the door of his

<sup>1</sup> Lalande, *Voyage d'un Français en Italy*, 1765-66, vol. viii.

<sup>2</sup> 1713 can hardly have been meant by Tartini, as he attained to the mastership necessary for the composition and execution of this sonata only years later.



## Violin Art in Italy

study like a protection against (or was it an invitation for?) future visitations of the unholy one.

Whatever we may wish to think of the master's dream—whether the effect of reading or of indigestion, of occult powers or the mere creations of a feverish brain—it may be regarded as the key-note to one side of Tartini's character; the side, that is, from which his creative genius largely drew: a blend of mysticism and devotion, mediævalism and modernity, of church and world, of childhood and maturity. Before composing, we are told, he liked to read one of Petrarca's sonnets or some other poem to give fancy a distinct direction, and often he succeeds in holding fast the mental mood or picture thus evoked, and portraying it in tones.

He also had the habit of putting mottoes in self-invented hieroglyphics over his manuscripts (see Fig. 31), and frequently under his violin parts verses of his pet poets. Perhaps they served as guide for the rendition of the music, or possibly also as a remembrance of the circumstances accompanying its birth.

Tartini's productivity as composer was astonishing. Only a small number of his sonatas and concertos for violin solo with quartett accompaniment seem to have been published in his lifetime and since his death, while a still smaller number are available to-day. The published works, according to Fétis,<sup>1</sup> consist of fifty sonatas and eighteen concertos.

Pro-  
ductivity

Not of anything like the importance as Tartini the

<sup>1</sup> *Biographie Universelle des Musiciens*, Paris.



# Story of the Violin

composer, but still interesting is Tartini the author. It is indeed surprising that the master, considering his musical fecundity and his duties as soloist and teacher, should yet have found time and pleasure in the pursuit of scientific and theoretical subjects. He embodied his observations

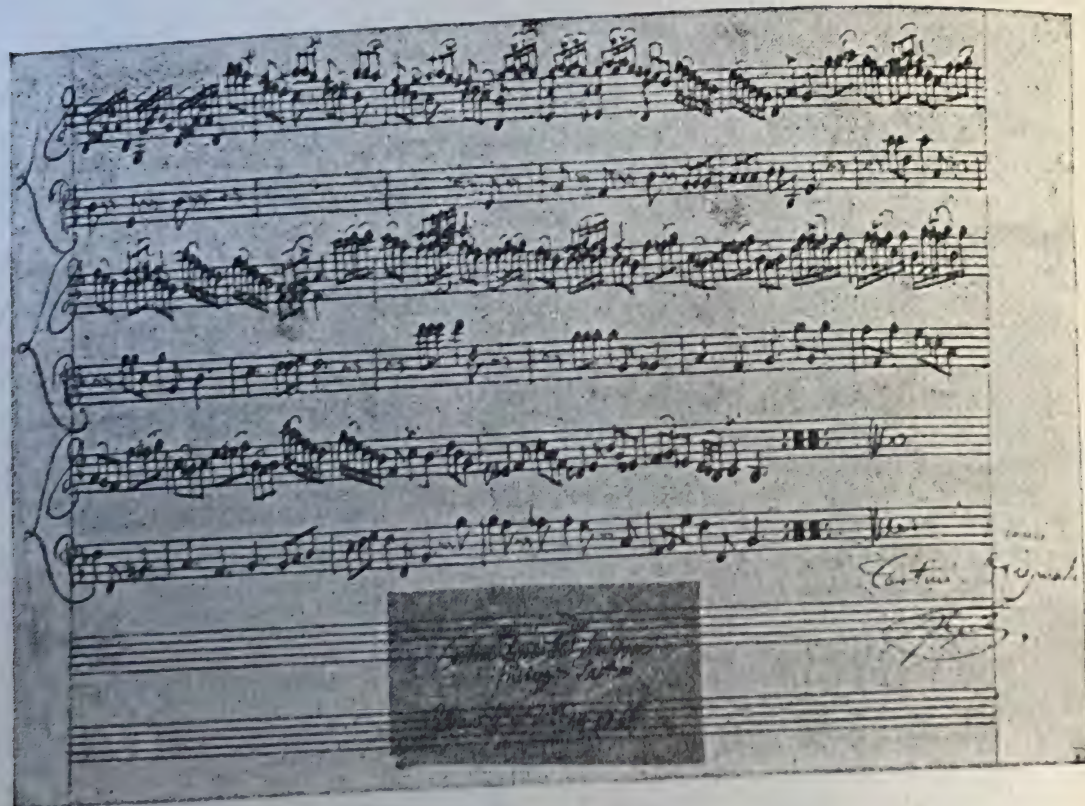


FIG. 31.—A COPY OF A TARTINI MANUSCRIPT.  
(Imperial Library, Berlin.)

and researches in several voluminous treatises, upon which Fétis, in his *Biography Universelle*, under "Tartini," gives a detailed argument:—"It appears that the master, during his voluntary confinement at Ancona, discovered the so-called 'differential tone,' a



## Violin Art in Italy

tone produced by sounding double-stops on the violin (providing they are absolutely in tune), and he subsequently tried to explain to himself and others this phenomenon in the above-mentioned treatise published at Padua, 1754. It was left for the great scholar of acoustics, Professor Helmholtz, more than a century later, to shed light on the question which agitated our master in his leisure hours."

Old Quanz, the well-known historical figure, contemporary of Tartini, violinist, flutist, critic and crank, and teacher of Frederick the Great, in describing the impression of Tartini's playing, when he heard the master in Prague, 1723, says: "He [Tartini] is indeed one of the greatest violinists. He produced a fine tone from his instrument. Finger and bow are equally under his control. He executed the greatest difficulties without apparent effort and in perfect tune. His trills, and even double trills, are done equally well with all fingers. He intersperses many double stops in slow as well as fast movements, and likes to play in the highest positions (tones)."

Tartini's  
Playing

The advance of Tartini's executive art on that of his great predecessor Corelli, from a bowing point of view alone, is plainly shown in his compositions. Unless we assume that within a few years (1713-23) that particular part of technique had made such great strides generally, the Paduan master must have been reformatory, nay, epoch-making in this respect as he was in others. It is well known that he improved also



# Story of the Violin

the form of the bow, giving it, compared to Corelli's, greater length and a slightly different curve.<sup>1</sup>

His extraordinary command of the bow was principally, as mentioned above, the result of his studies at Ancona, to which Veracini had given him the initiative.

In a small treatise by Fayolle, *Paganini and Bériot*, we find some interesting information as to the manner in which the master had conducted these studies:—

(Translation.)

“Tartini had two bows, one divided and the stick marked according to common ( $\frac{4}{4}$ ), the other according to  $\frac{3}{4}$  time. In these divisions he obtained all subdivisions down to the infinitely small ones; and, as he had found that the vertical up-stroke was shorter than the perpendicular down-stroke, he had the same piece played, beginning with the down as well as up-stroke, and with the same inflections. He also had written in large letters on his music-stand the following rule: ‘Strength without hardness, flexibility without too great softness.’”

In addition, for the benefit of his pupils, he embodied the results of his bowing studies in a work entitled *Arte dell' arco*. It consists of fifty variations on a gavotte by Corelli.

But this brings us to the subject of Tartini as a teacher. His fame as a player and composer alone **As Teacher** would have been sufficient to draw pupils in numbers to Padua, but it appears, and one can partially see from the above remarks, that Tartini

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix.



## Violin Art in Italy

was as great in the class-room as he was on the platform and in his private study. At times the master's house must have resembled a veritable small conservatory, so large was the number of students who enjoyed his instruction. His was not yet an age of cheap and good instruction books. Tartini's pupils depended on their master for almost everything, and he was heart and soul in his work; and how almost paternal in his solicitude for his young protégés appears from a lesson given by correspondence to a pupil of his, Signora Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen, which has been preserved for us. It is a most instructive and interesting document, divided into three sections, and treating in a masterly way of the elements in the management of the bow, the trill, and the positions.<sup>1</sup>

The most interesting and best-known of Tartini's pupils are:—

Pietro Nardini (born 1722 at Fibiiani, in Tuscany; died in Florence, 1793), Tartini's favourite pupil, who nursed the master in his last illness. “Ein Geiger der Liebe im Schosse der Grazien geboren,” says Schubarth, the ill-fated German poet and writer, of him. He is also distinguished as a composer; his D Major Sonata<sup>2</sup> is one of the loveliest creations in early Italian violin literature.

Tartini's  
Pupils

Domenico Ferrari (died 1780). To him is ascribed, if not the invention, at least the first more extensive use of harmonics on the violin.

<sup>1</sup> Wasielewski: *Die Violine und ihre Meister*; Leipzig, 1869.

<sup>2</sup> Davids: *Hohe Schule*; Breitkopf und Härtel.



# Story of the Violin

Giulio Meneghini (17—) succeeded his master at the church of St. Anthony.

Pasqualini Bini (born 1720) studied three or four years with Tartini. He went to Rome, where he became a serious rival to Francesco Montanari, a celebrity in his day, and successor to Corelli at St. Peter's from 1717 to 1730. A pupil of Bini was Barbella, known by a sonata (published by Schott).

Filipo Manfredi (c. 1738-80), a friend of Bocherini, whose trios and quartetts he introduced first in Paris, in 1771, with great success.

Johann Gottlieb Graun,<sup>1</sup> Pagin, and Pierre Lahoussaye.<sup>2</sup>

Tartini's other pupils cannot claim our interest in the same degree. Some, no doubt, were clever and es-

teemed artists in their day, but on the whole  
Only their names tell us little or nothing; we read  
Names them to forget them as quickly as read.

Their talents, their lives, like those of so many artists whom fate has not put in the front rank, were stepping-stones on which the genius of the violin trod on his way to greater heights—flowers by the wayside which he kissed or crushed. I therefore only mention names as one would read off inscriptions, crumbling and faded, on the tombstones of a village churchyard, the heart apologising for the hand which writes them—only names:—Alberghi, Carminati, Don Paolo Guastarobba, Petit, Pagni, Nazari, Angiolo Morigi, Giuseppe Sig-

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter VII.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter IX.



## Violin Art in Italy

noretti, Count Thurn and Taxis and Obermayer of Prague (amateurs), Holzbogen of Munich, Kammel from Bohemia, Lorenz Schmitt of Würzburg.

In addition, the following are the best-known violinists of the Piedmontese school:—

Francesco Chiabran (born 1723). A great favourite for a time in Paris, and known yet as **The Pied-** the composer of a once popular piece, **montese** "La Chasse." **School:**

Felice Giardini (born in Turin, 1716; died **Pupils of** in Moscow, as opera impressario, 1796). A **Somis** talented artist with a chequered life, passed largely in London.

Marie Leclair.<sup>1</sup>

Gaetano Pugnani (1726-1803), the greatest of Somis's pupils, studied also for a time with Tartini, and was highly esteemed by his contemporaries as violinist and composer. His importance, however, lay in his work as teacher. Being the master of Viotti, he was the direct link between our modern (French and Franco-Belgian) schools and the great old ones of Rome, Turin, and Padua.

Pupils of Pugnani (according to their comparative merits, in ascending order):—Gioachimo Traversa, Romani, Ludovico Borghi (1770 in London), Borra (Turin), Antonio Conforti, Ludovico **Pupils of** Molino (succeeded Pugnani at the Royal **Pugnani** Theatre in Turin), Felice Radicati (1778-1823), A. Olivieri, Antonio Bartolomeo Bruni (lived in Paris;

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter IX.



## Story of the Violin

fertile composer and author of a violin method; some pretty duets for two violins are still in use), Anton Janitch, Giambattista Polledro (1781-1853; greatly admired by his contemporaries, and even occasionally compared to Viotti), Giovanni Battista Viotti.



## CHAPTER IV.

### VIOTTI.

WITH this incomparable master of the violin we reach a new epoch in the development of the art. Equally great as executant and composer, and re-  
former in both directions, Viotti occupies in his own art world a position somewhat  
similar to that accorded to Corelli, only that the younger master had the indubitable advantage of finding the ground well tilled and prepared for his appearance, not only in his own particular sphere, but in the whole wide field of music generally.

Reformer  
in Two  
Directions

If Corelli's work—speaking of composition now—may be likened to the broad foundation of an edifice, Viotti represents the noble, large-proportioned superstructure. What follows after him was more or less the building out, the outer and inner decorations, the turrets, gables, sculptures, and ornaments. The roof and steeple, I fear, are yet to be built; the edifice is open yet on top, and lets the light of heaven in, and also the rain sometimes.

Viotti created modern violin art in its best sense. From being orthodox it became cosmopolitan. If



# Story of the Violin

Corelli and Tartini spoke yet in their works the language, however beautiful, of their time, Creator of land, and Church, Viotti's is the language of the world, the Volapük in which Haydn, Modern Violin Art Mozart, and Beethoven uttered their immortal thoughts. Giovanni Battista Viotti in its Best Sense

(Fig. 32) was born on the 23rd of May 1753 (strangely enough, just one hundred years after Corelli), at a tiny place, Fontanetto, in Childhood and Youth the County of Piedmont, North Italy. His father, a smith and amateur on the

horn, was endowed with musical instincts keen enough to discover and encourage his little boy's musical proclivities, which showed themselves at a very early age. Nay, more, this remarkable smith undertook to instruct the lad in the elements of music, and it is just possible that Giovanni Battista had already declared his childish love to some toy fiddle which he had somehow got into his possession before a certain Giovanni, an itinerant lute-player, came to the village and gave him some lessons on it.

Strange are the ways of genius! Under the most unfavourable conditions the tender plant will grow as if it drew its strength directly from the source of all strength by channels unknown to other mortals.

Soon Giovanni and his lute had gone again, and the boy was left for further progress to himself. Fancy him, little man, in some meanly-furnished attic or room over his father's shop—in the sole company of saints looking out of cheap, gilded frames—trying to find a



## Viotti

way unaided through the intricate maze of violin technics, while from below—like a rhythmical background—sounded through the summer air the smith's clear, sharp hammer strokes. And yet a way he found somehow; and the kind spirit which watches over such blessed little fiddle prodigies as he was, guided him safely further. At the age of thirteen he found a patron in the son of the Marchesa di Borghera, in Turin, who, enchanted with the boy's exceptional talents, provided for his further education (Pugnani).

In the spring of 1780 Viotti undertook his first concert tour in the company

of his master, and now follows a succession of triumphs—first in Germany, then in Poland, Russia, and later in London and Paris—such as very few violinists after him and hardly any one before him had had to record. The originality of his compositions no less than the superb qualities of his executive art, combining absolute

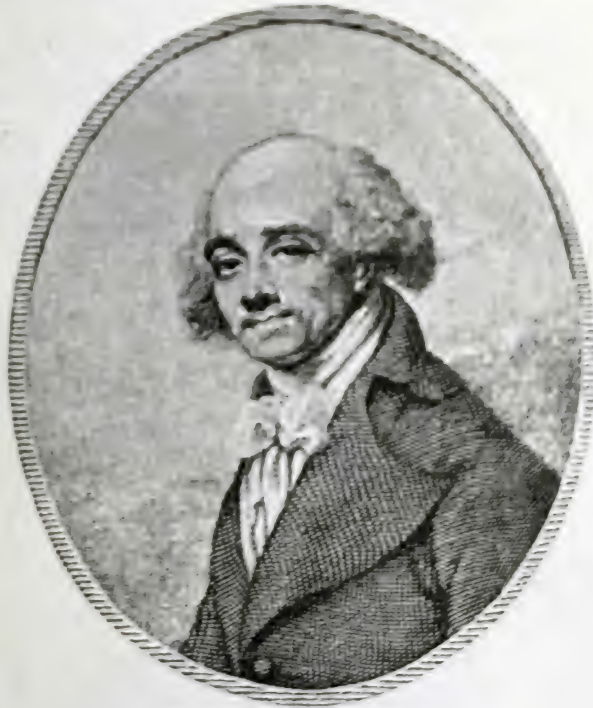


FIG. 32.—VIOTTI.  
(From the Imperial Library, Berlin.)

A Surprise  
to the  
World



## Story of the Violin

beauty of tone and marvellous dexterity with fire and feeling, grandeur, elegance, and withal charming simplicity, came to the musical world as a surprise. One could not place him, compare him; he was "hors de comparaison." Critics ceased to be critics, and only exhausted their vocabulary of superlatives trying to express adequately the impression he made on them, and his professional brethren rivalled with each other in doing him homage.

When Baillot in later years recalled Viotti's appearance in Paris in the words: "Je le croyais Achille mais c'est Agamemnon," he only voiced in the hysterical phraseology of the time the complete surrender of the violinistic profession to the incomparable genius of Viotti.

In order to understand such enthusiasm, which may strike some as being just a little exaggerated, particularly when they consider the pieces with which Viotti worked his miracles on the public and profession (viz., works given to-day to our pupils in the intermediate stage to practice), it must be remembered that nothing like the Viotti concerts had ever been heard before.

The old Italian masters wrote sonatas and concertos for violin solo with the thin accompaniment of a string quartette or only a second violin and bass. Now came this new charmer with the full equipment of the Haydn orchestra.

The many voices of the symphony—flutes, oboes, clarinettes, bassoons, and horns, joined in the song of triumph of the solo violin; even the stately trumpet did,



## Viotti

in the "tuttis," homage to its king. The passages, too, new and daring, full of splendour, force, and fire; and after them the cantilene, like the moonlight falling on a stormy sea and calming it. Can we wonder that the world stood breathless? Then, with it all, the rendering

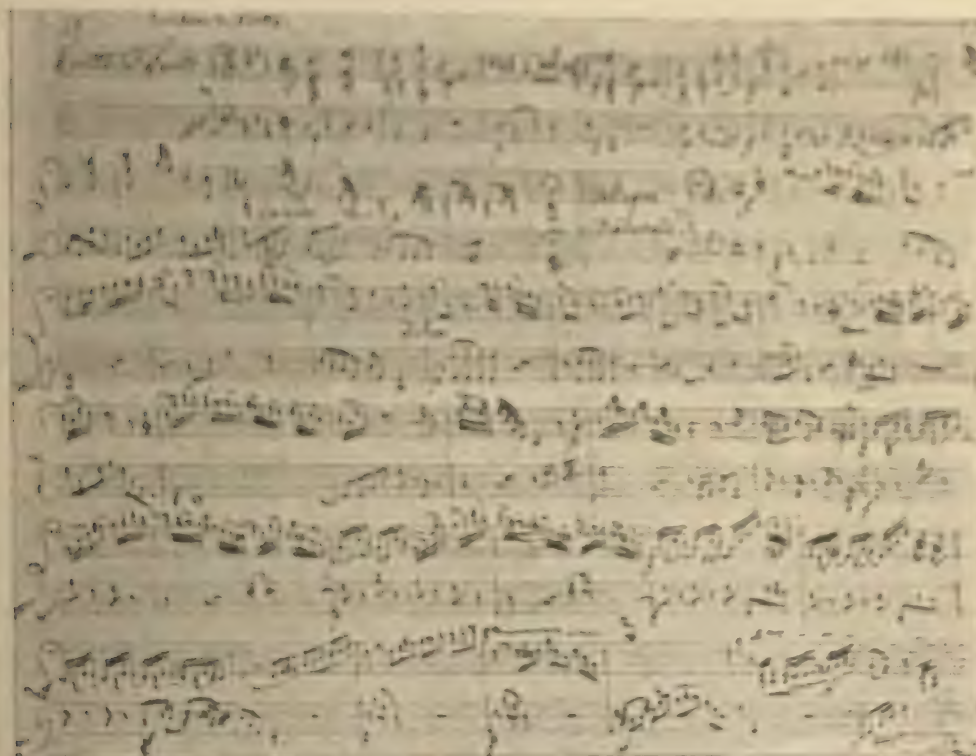


FIG. 33.—FACSIMILE OF A MANUSCRIPT BY VIOTTI  
(At the Imperial Library in Berlin.)

itself, of which we can now hardly have a clear conception!

We give these concertos to our pupils for fingering, bowing, and phrasing exercises. To many, they may seem only dwelling-places for the ghosts of an antiquated



# Story of the Violin

technique, but there is the possibility that it takes the interpreting genius, the great musical soul of Viotti to fill with new life the chambers of its former noble palaces.

So much at present on the subject of Viotti's compositions. His muse gave us twenty-nine concertos, besides many charming duets for two violins, quartetts, and string trios.

It is weary to record triumphs which are always the same in essence though they may vary in form. Mortal man cannot go on breathing an atmosphere of incense without feeling the effects in some way. Viotti

Anti-  
climax suddenly retired from his public post as first violinist of the century. Why? Because at one time (1784), in Paris, a concert in which he played had not been patronised quite as well as usual, and on top of this annoyance, his performance had not created the usual enthusiasm. To add insult to injury, another, greatly inferior violinist, who gave a concert the next day, pleased immensely, and furnished the topic of conversation in musical circles for several days. So Viotti vowed he would not play in public again, and like Achilles in his tent, he scorned the public, leaving to others of the craft the fighting and the spoils. He kept his vow for many years. Only in exclusive friendly circles could he occasionally be heard. During these years of seclusion he devoted himself to teaching and composing.

Unfortunately, the great artist, like others before and after him, would chase fortune on precarious by-ways—



## Viotti

at least, not on the high road plainly marked out for him by the generous giver of gifts. The following chapters in Viotti's life are the sad story of a great man, a giant becoming the play of circumstances, like a dry leaf the toy of the wind. He had already in 1787 applied for the post of director to the Paris Grand Opera without being successful. In 1788, however, he was offered the position, which he took eagerly, and set to work to engage the best available singers for the institute, when the outbreak of the Revolution brought the enterprise to a sudden and disastrous end. It was doubly disastrous for him, because he lost his whole hard-earned fortune.

Chased  
Fortune on  
Precarious  
By-ways

In 1792 he came to London poor, and vow or not, he had to play again. For a short time it seemed as if his old star shone once more, be it through English fogs; but soon storm-clouds rolled over it again. Viotti was suspected of political intrigues—probably in consequence of his connections with French emigrants—and advised to leave England. At a friend's country-house near Hamburg he was offered a refuge, and here he subsequently lived (until 1795) in complete seclusion, devoting his time to composition. Many of his charming duets for two violins originated here. One of the volumes contains the touching preface: "Cet ouvrage est le fruit du loisir que le malheur me procure. Quelques morceaux ont été dictés par la peine, d'autres par l'espérance." (This work is the fruit of leisure which misfortune procures for me. Some pieces have been



## Story of the Violin

dictated by pain, others by hope.) But pain must have been greater with Viotti than hope. When the suspicion of political intrigue resting on him had been found to be without foundation, and he

once more returned to London, he completely surprised his friends and admirers by becoming a wine merchant. The former

**A Dealer  
in Wines**

high priest of Apollo a dealer in wines! It seems a tantalising irony of fate. But when an artist as great as Viotti finds himself in his declining years still requiring to earn his living, and yet is unwilling to step back into the whirlpool of concert life, which has completely lost its charm for him, is it so strange that he should turn his back on Apollo and follow Mercury whom chance perhaps did send in his way?

Better to become a wine merchant than sit moping over fate; better to live (since to live he must) in an office busy with account-books and let past glories shine through latticed windows, than go searching for new ones not worth the trouble! Viotti a wine merchant! There is a touch of genius even here—it is the eagle in the cage, but yet the eagle still.

In London henceforth he lived. Only once, in 1818, he allowed himself to be drawn away again to Paris to undertake the direction of the terribly mismanaged opera, that former cause of his misfortune. If hope had allured him once more—alas! it proved a cruel hope. It only offered him one flower of welcome in his beloved France, a great ovation at the Conservatoire, in which students and teachers joined to do homage to their



## Viotti

revered master, and where he played in public for the last time. After desperate efforts to bring order into that operatic institution, he was reproached with having caused its decadence, and forced to resign in 1822. And now, an old man, he came to England's hospitable shores to die. Although fate, sorry for her former darling, would not let him die in poverty and want—a pension of six thousand francs having been granted him on his resignation, he departed this life two years later, on the 10th of May 1824, a disappointed, sad, and lonely man.

I cannot close these remarks on this wonderful master of the violin without referring to his personality as we know it through the sympathetic pens of Arthur Pougin, Fétis, Fayolle, and others. Seldom genius selected a His  
Personality worthier dwelling-place. His figure and bearing were distinguished, his manners refined, his face open, expressive, and almost always smiling; his heart kind and generous, his mind in sympathy with and open to everything that is true, noble, and beautiful in art and in nature; an admirer of poetry, a lover of the country; well read, intelligent, witty, and yet as naïve as a child—such was Viotti, favourite of the muses. Says Pougin of him: “Chez lui les impressions de la nature étaient ineffaçables. Tour les jours de sa vie aux approches du coucher du soleil il se sentait un accablement ou plutôt un accès de tristesse qu’il ne jamais pu vaincre.”

Was it genius longing to go home? Viotti was the last great representative of classical Italian violin art,



## Story of the Violin

a worthy third in the triumvirate—Corelli, Tartini, Viotti. Of his importance for the development of violin-playing as teacher I shall speak in connection with violin art in France, under which head the subject properly falls.



## CHAPTER V.

### SOME MORE NAMES AND ONE FAMOUS ONE: THE OLD-TIME VIRTUOSO.

THERE are yet, independent of the classical schools of Corelli, Tartini, Somis, Vivaldi, and Pugnani, a number of Italian violinists who shone for a time with greater or less brilliancy; but I shall have to content myself again with only quoting their names, leaving the reader to acquaint himself, if he so chooses, with the particulars of their lives (as far as they are known), in the pages of the oft-mentioned exhaustive work by Wasielewski.<sup>1</sup> This author I also follow in the chronological arrangement of the names. They are:—

Some  
Names

Francesco Mori (born in London 1793, died 1842). For a short time pupil of Viotti; conductor of the Philharmonic Concerts.

Gian Pietro Guignon (born 1702 at Turin, died 1774 or 1775, in Paris). The last "king of violinists" of minstrel fame.

<sup>1</sup> *Die Violine und ihre Meister*; and also Fétis, in *Biographie Universelle des Musiciens*.



# Story of the Violin

Giuseppe Canavasso. Lived between 1735 and 1753 in Paris.

Carlo Giuseppe Toeschi (1724-88).

Francesco Galeazzi (1738-1819).

Giuseppe Demachi (1740).

Giovanni Giuseppe Cambini (b. 1746, d. about 1825).

Guerini (1740-60). At the Hague, after that in London.

Francesco Falco; Giovanni Battista Noferi; Sebastiani Bodini; Eligio Celestino (1739-1812).

Nicolo Mestrino (born 1748 in Milan, died 1790 in Paris), Giuseppe Puppo (born 1749 at Lucca, died 1827); both of these are among the best in this connection.

Bartolomeo Campagnoli (1751-1827). Known by his violin method and études.

Federigo Fiorillo, born 1753 in Brunswick, Germany, was in 1788 in London, and in 1794 employed as alto player in the Salomon Quartett. He went from London to Amsterdam, where he probably died. He is celebrated for his thirty-six Caprices for violin solo—one of the finest contributions to didactic violin literature.

Alessandro Rolla (1757-1804); Bernardo Ferrara (born 1810).

Gaetano Vai and Giuseppe Giorgis (born 1777 in Turin).

But there is yet the figure of a man looking at us across the gulf of time and altered art conditions with—

The Old-  
time  
Virtuoso

I admit it—strangely fascinating and appealing eyes. It is a handsome man, with amiable manners and a modest smile; a gentleman, immaculately dressed, adorned with jewellery, fine lace, and sparkling buttons on the



## Old-time Virtuoso

waistcoat; he looks like a courtier, and indeed he was one—they say he was a favourite of Catherine of Russia—and his name?—Antonio Lolli. To many now perhaps a strange, unmeaning name, and yet it once thrilled hearts, old and young, and its magic echoed through the capitals of Europe. And who was he? The first sketch nature made of Paganini—the father of all fiddle-virtuosi! A bad musician, he was called; he admitted it himself. He could not play the second fiddle in the orchestra without his technique, like an untamed creature, running wild in runs and trills unsuited to the music and the modest post; he could not play a Haydn string quartet in time, and to escape the sore ordeal would make the funniest excuses. His compositions were a farce. He lived at loggerheads with four-part harmony, and rules of counterpoint were unknown quantities to him. He turned, with as much cleverness as modesty, his own art and himself to ridicule. But he could play the violin! Says Schubart, after calling him the Shakespeare of the violin:

“He [Lolli] in his playing not only united the perfections of the Tartini and Ferrari schools, but found yet an entirely new way. His bowing is inimitable (ewig unnachahmlich). One thought hitherto quick passages could only be expressed by a short kind of stroke; he, however, draws the whole bow, as long as it is, over the strings, and by the time he gets to the point the hearer has already been treated to a perfect hailstorm of tones. Besides that, he has the art of



# Story of the Violin

drawing from his violin tones never heard before. He imitates everything to perfection—whatever gives a sound in animal creation. His velocity borders on witchery. Not only does he execute octaves, but also tenths with the greatest finesse, and trills in thirds as well as sixths, and sails in the dizziest heights of tones so that he often finishes his piece with a tone which seems to be the *non plus ultra* of tones."

This gives us an idea of Antonio Lolli the violinist; and when I add that he was born at Bergamo between 1728 and 1733, and was for a time engaged with Nardini, his artistic antipodes, at the Stuttgart Court; that he travelled through the length and breadth of Europe, appearing now in St. Petersburg, now in London, Palermo, Paris; that he received from Catherine II. marks of her favour and admiration; was given to dissipation, gambling, and other vices, and died, after a most brilliant, meteor-like career, in obscurity in Sicily in 1802,—the picture of Antonio Lolli is about complete. But not so the story of his influence.

The Glorification of Technique

This lasted down to our days. It may be termed the glorification of technique for its own sake—the autocracy of virtuosity.

The seed which Locatelli sowed had grown up, sure enough, and Lolli was the first fruit of the tree, which soon lustily spread its branches in all directions.

We find after Lolli an indefinite number of men who tread in his tracks, and bring in turn credit and dis-



## Old-time Virtuoso

credit on his name and style:—Woldemar, arch-charlatan, who, to redeem himself, writes a violin-method without a method, and Jean Mane Jarnowick, or Giornovich (born 1745, at Palermo), talented, violent, vicious, who died (1802) in St. Petersburg, with the billiard cue in his hand (Lolli's two pupils); further, Jacob Scheller (born 1759, in Bohemia), who is not above amusing his audiences by placing a snuff-box on his violin to imitate the song of old nuns—(N.B., after he has performed some marvellous feats of legitimate technique); and Alexandre Boucher (born in Paris, 1770; died 1861), king of the art of advertising, who looks like Napoleon, and can play like an Alexander, and professes to be a Socrates on the fiddle, but prefers to play the harlequin besides, and splashes before the public like a prize swimmer until his death at ninety-one. From these four worst specimens of their kind down to the big virtuosi of the nineteenth century and our own days much has been said and written, and much praise and more abuse been heaped on the head of the virtuoso. Of course, no sane musician will take the part of the Scheller and Boucher kind, abnormalities such as the second half of the eighteenth century bred in numbers, together with the social and political Cagliostroas and De la Mottes and other worthies. Nor will it do to place mere technique on the throne to worship where true art and its companion, the ideal, should sit

Treading  
in his  
Tracks

Has Done  
more Good  
than he  
gets Credit  
for



## Story of the Violin

and reign. But on the whole, I think, even the old-time virtuoso has done more good to violin art than he gets credit for, particularly at the hand of his brother, the *bona-fide* musician. Has he not explored the length and breadth, the height and depth of the realm of fiddle-and-bow, as the old Phœnicians the seas, and discovered many things, many a trick worth having, which the serious artist was glad to take from him and use for better ends? The remark of Schubart on Lolli "Playing a whole hailstorm of notes in one bow," etc., is significant enough. And to become a Lolli—self-taught in addition—what infinite patience, what toil, what untiring enthusiasm, yea, what devoted love for the instrument was necessary, and does that go for nothing?

But he has done more—the old-time virtuoso. He has put the better artist on his metal, and exacted from him the best that was in him. He infused the admiration and love for the violin into thousands of souls which probably would not have been reached in any other way, for we all know that with many the way to the soul—nay, to the ear—goes through the eye, and the old-time virtuoso usually took care that that way was made attractive. How could violin art have been so rapidly and effectually carried into distant parts of the world but for the virtuoso? When we think that sober Corelli died in 1713, and already—forty years later—Lolli created a sensation in St. Petersburg with his mad sixths and tenths and runs and trills, we get an idea



## Old-time Virtuoso

how effectually indeed the virtuoso worked; and in later, better days, I only mention Miska Hauser, Rémenyi, Vieuxtemps, and others who first carried the banner of the violin to our cousins across the seas.

As to travelling in the olden days? It took (1674) Lord Shrewsbury and his tutor from one Thursday afternoon to the second following Friday night to get from London to Paris under favourable conditions.

It became a regular *tour de force* to go from London or Paris (where the virtuoso usually earned his spurs at a *concert spirituel*) to Moscow and St. Petersburg, either *viâ* the cities of the Rhine, South Germany, Austria, and Poland, or by a northerly course, touching Leipzig, Berlin, Dantzic, Königsberg, Riga, etc. What distances by stage-coach, with winter in Russia, through awful solitudes of snow! How much pluck on the one hand, and what ceaseless energy on the other was necessary for the continuous life of the old-time virtuoso.

A Regular  
Tour de  
Force

And last—let us be fair—the violin, most versatile of instruments, affects different people differently. To say that only the classical styles of Tartini, Viotti, or Spohr, etc., should be cultivated, and aught else combated and suppressed as injurious to the higher development of art instincts in the public, would be like insisting on the same diet for all manner of individuals, robust and weak. The great majority, we know, have only weak musical digestive organs. Musical art will take care of

Not the  
same Diet  
for all



## Story of the Violin

itself; the unworthy, the shallow, the trivial will fall off in time like shells and husks in the autumn. *Airs variés* of the old style are even now looked down upon

by our generation of students—the age has outgrown them; and so this process goes on.

Has fulfilled his Mission The old-time virtuoso has passed away, and the later virtuoso followed after him. Both

have fulfilled their mission, and who will say it was not an important one?



## CHAPTER VI.

### PAGANINI : A STUDY.

JUST about one hundred years after Corelli had established the first school of violin-playing, in that same Italy, the genius of the violin (whatever force that be) was preparing his greatest surprise for the fiddle-loving world: a mammoth—an Eiffel Tower appearance, and nothing less, in the gentle art of Corelli and Tartini. I mean, of course, Paganini (Fig. 34). To think that this extraordinary man died only sixty-four years ago, and his name seems to have the ring of mythland about it already, and its every syllable to have gathered around it the moss of centuries! Is it not almost as if this certain entity Paganini had lived always like a sort of wandering ghost of the fiddle, hovering around the mediæval minstrel and guiding his bow and fingers, so that the superstitious peasant fled from him as from one possessed by the devil; or as if, as long as there existed a fiddle in the world, this man Paganini had been forming to become at last incarnate in that weird familiar figure which goes by his name?

In proportion as the great classical masters of the violin from Corelli to Viotti had led the violin-loving world along certain grooves, that world was unprepared



# Story of the Violin

for an appearance like Paganini, and startled by it. It lay quite outside all known and accepted traditions.

Indeed, for its sources we must look to the **The World Unprepared** directly opposite direction—the Lolli and the Boucher quarter of the art. Paganini was a

sort of monster-fungus on that—shall I say obnoxious?—soil of virtuosodom. The Lollis and the Bouchers were the sketches, he, the full portrait, the culmination, consummation, the X Y Z of virtuosity. But even that alone would not have given Paganini his unique position in violin art. A variety of factors combined to produce a phenomenon such as he. The extraordinary impression he made on his time was not due only to the exhibition—till then undreamed—of finger and bowing gymnastics,<sup>1</sup> and by the nobler accents of his reproductive art—fire, pathos, warmth, and tenderness; it

His Contributions to Technique was due in no small degree to his personality, a mixture of the genius and the advertising-loving quack, being yet made more effective by a weird-looking, fantastic, tragi-comic figure, unlike anything ever witnessed before on the stage of the world. Nature had given him that personality, that figure, but he accentuated its corners.

Never man fitted himself more thoroughly for his mission than Paganini. It is said that he practised for

<sup>1</sup> Paganini's contributions to violin technique were chiefly: an extensive use of the staccato à ricochet (thrown staccato), double harmonics, pizzicato for the left hand intermingled with arco, etc., as well as feats on one single (G) string, unusual stretches, novel effective passages in thirds, sixths, and tenths.





FIG. 34.—PAGANINI.







# Paganini

years ten hours a day, until he sank down exhausted. "Le génie c'est la patience" was his maxim, and he lived up to it. Either intellect or body had to succumb in this uneven struggle. The will, the mind, here being the stronger of the two, the body was left a wreck, and the natural reaction of a stilted youth—extravagance, dissipation, vice, and self-indulgence in every form completed the ruin. And this face and body, this wrecked and ruined castle of an iron master-will, assailed by relentless foes, illness, despondency, misanthropy, and physical pains, he carried through the world from town to town as a living spectacle, a sort of bogey, a haunting spectre; and the public seized eagerly on it, invested it, trimmed it up further according to its fancy. His extraordinary artistic powers were only part of the show which people went to see and hear. The knife with which this pale demon on the stage was said to have once killed his love<sup>1</sup> could be distinctly seen hanging over his long black locks. The prison had written on that face with an awful hand its starvation bill of fare—and for that the public paid (and Paganini had an eye for box-office receipts).

Only Part  
of the  
Show

So this man moved over the European stage for the

<sup>1</sup> One of the many stories, according to which he had murdered his wife (or love), and was doing penance for his crime in prison. The gaoler allowed him the solace of his violin, but no duplicate set of strings, so when one by one the E, A, and D were broken, he performed those marvellous feats on the G, the last remaining. The story is, of course, an invention. The true version of how he acquired his astounding dexterity in playing on one string is given by Fétis and others. (See below.)



## Story of the Violin

space of ten or twenty years, upsetting all preconceived notions of violin technique. He came amid storms of applause and scenes of unbounded enthusiasm, and disappeared again with something like Mephistophelian laughter, leaving the public dazed and the poor fiddle drudge in suicidal despondency. A comet drawing in its train irresistibly all that comes into its way, but following a law of its own, revolving around an axis of its own, impersonating the very life of the fiddle—that was Paganini. Nor will there ever be another like him. It is absurd to talk of a Paganini redevivus, a second Paganini, every time a great technician comes along and plays that one and only long-dead Paganini's compositions. It is as absurd as it would be to say that another Columbus will discover another new world, or another Galileo protest that the earth moves around the sun.

Paganini was a law unto himself (whether a good or bad one does not matter here). He created his technique, his style, on the basis of prior achievements. The others only imitate it: with him it was a revelation, with the others it is every-day language, and smacks of the studio, the class-room, the rote.

We would not miss this greatest of fiddlers in the annals of violin-playing—no, not for a Was Paganini's Spohr or any other great modern master; Influence but his influence can hardly be called beneficial. It forced violin-playing into a Procrustean-bed unsuited to its true nature and Good? mission. Paganini had temporarily transformed the



## Paganini

angel into a devil, and the angel did not escape unscathed—Lucifer burned his wings.

Violin-playing will never be quite what it was before Paganini. He helped to hurry the growing-old process—brought out the lines, the spots, and the wrinkles on the once fair face. He, before all others, established the iron rule of technique, with its train of other evils, in the place of the gentler reign of charming naiveté of the elder master.

It may be urged against this assumption that we have long outlived that influence, that it is an insult to men like Joachim and Ysaye to mention Paganini's art in connection with their name. So it may appear. In reality a violin-playing and violin-loving world will continue to carry the burden of his influence. It is like a curse that has attached itself to the young student when he starts out on a career. "There was once a man, his name was Paganini. He could play like no other—why can't I become like him? Let me try at least." He does try, in spite of the still, small voice within him and better examples around him. He tries until the best years of his life have been fiddled away in vain attempts. And the large public? Only too often, when it has once tasted Paganini, the ordinary fare will not quite satisfy. Not that the people are to blame. Who will deny the fascination that technical display on the violin carries with it?—the instrument so small and such a perplexing world of sound from it—but the craving of the public has reacted on the artist, who has to supply it or bear the



# Story of the Violin

consequences. And he does supply it at the sacrifice of countless hours of drudgery, which too often leave the mind unfit for higher flights of aspiration.

In a narrow little street in Genoa, not far from the harbour, stands an unprepossessing-looking house, painted pale pink, with green Venetian shutters. Every loiterer in the neighbourhood will direct you to it, but there is no mistaking "La Casa di Paganini" (Fig. 35), with its shrine to the Madonna handsomely executed in stone, and the marble tablet bearing the inscription:

"Il Giorno XXVII. di Ottobre dell'

Anno MDCCLXXXII.,

Nacque

A decoro di Genoa a

Delizio del Mondo

NICOLÒ PAGANINI,

Nella Divina Arte dei Suoni

Insuperator Maestro."

In this house on the third floor, consisting of three small rooms, the great virtuoso was born on the 18th of February, 1784.<sup>1</sup> There Nicolo grew up, a delicate, sensitive child, with a marvellous musical precocity. His father, it is said (though Conestabile tries to defend him), was very harsh in his treatment of the boy, and we may pretty safely assume that the little fellow's years

<sup>1</sup> *Vita di Nicolò Paganini da Genova*, by Giancarlo Conestabile, Perugia, 1851; the date on the tablet will be seen to be October 27th, 1782.



# *\$139,200 Violin*

L O N D O N — American violinist Elaine Weldon sold her Guarneri violin Thursday for \$139,200, the second highest auction price ever paid for a musical instrument. A spokesman for Christie's, the art auction house where the sale was held, said the highest price paid for a violin was \$201,600 paid for a Stradivarius at Sotheby's in 1971.





FIG. 35.—PAGANINI'S HOUSE AT GENOA.

Photo by A. Noack, Genoa.]







## Paganini

of early childhood were not bedded on roses. For no matter how talented a child may be, no matter how much Nicolo may have loved his little violin, a child is a child with childish desires, and the shouts of the boys of his age in the street must have caused pangs of regret in the young heart.

Thus early musical genius begins often its life-long sacrifice. Poor little boy, shut up in that room in company with scales and arpeggios, and a heart as full of wishes as that blue sea yonder full of gay white sails. Pity all prodigies. A whole life of success, seas of adulation cannot atone for the absence of that small streamlet by which the child-mind plays in sweet unconscious peace. As it was, the imaginative, imprisoned child poured his fancy into his technical studies. Playing at marbles and blocks became with him playing with thirds, sixths, and octaves; picking flowers on the wayside, or shells and pebbles by the mysterious sea, became wrenching the mysteries of technique from his little violin. Although his father and a certain Servetto are said to have been his teachers until he was eleven, he probably owed most to himself. How effectually the child had possessed himself of these fleeting ghosts of the fiddle—the trills, staccatos, etc., etc., became evident when the father took his talented boy to Rolla (a reputed violinist) at Parma. Rolla was ill in bed at the time and rather disinclined to see his visitors, who were waiting in the adjoining room. There and then young Nicolo, on discovering on the music-stand the latest concerto of



## Story of the Violin

Rolla, to shorten the time of waiting played it off at sight, so that Rolla sprang up in blank astonishment and declared he could teach the boy nothing. Nevertheless, according to Regli, Paganini had lessons from him for about six months, while at the same time he enjoyed instruction in composition from Ghiretti. After that Nicolo returned to Genoa, and for several years gave himself up to the studies—nay, titanic struggles, rather—which brought him to the realisation of the ideals he had set for himself.

Existing compositions did not offer what he sought; so he composed for himself. Another Columbus, he sailed the seas of technique for new discoveries, and he found his America, treasures never dreamed of before, and seized them with an eager and unquestioning hand (Fig. 36).

That was Paganini in the making. When he appeared a few years later (1801) before the big world, his command over bow and finger-board was such that he was able to play publicly at first sight any composition put before him. His success was instantaneous, and with the impetuosity of youth, drinking at the deep well of freedom and pleasure for the first time, he indulged too much, and his body, already weakened by excessive study, became the physical wreck described above. He subsequently appeared and disappeared from public view, and his disappearances (which also gave rise to the stories about him) meant only too often a retirement forced upon him by physical sufferings.



# Manuscript by Paganini

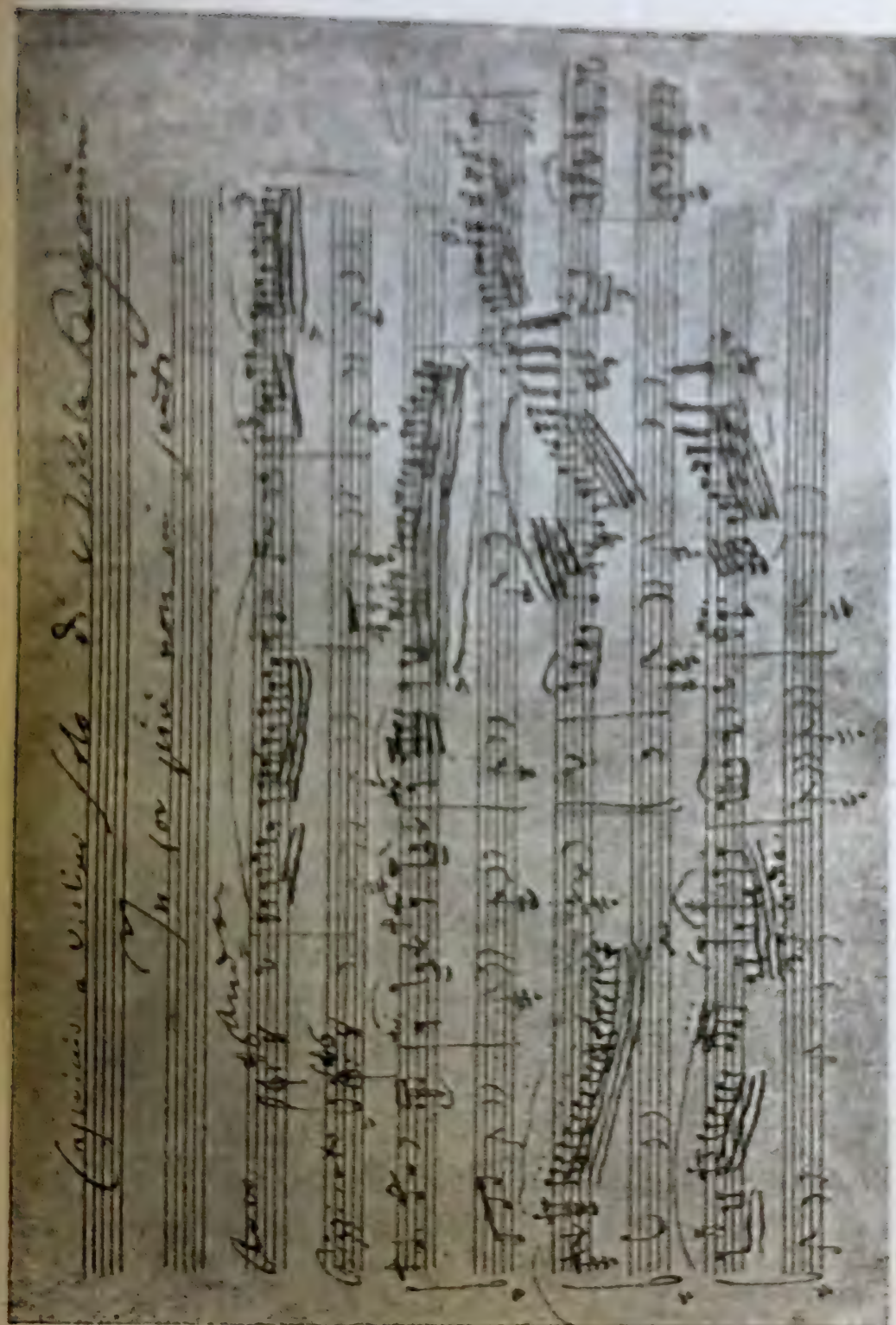


FIG. 36.—FACSIMILE OF A MANUSCRIPT BY PAGANINI. ENRIKESSE MEISEL, WITH PUBLISHED ACCOMPANIMENT FOR THE LEFT HAND.

At the Imperial Library, Berlin.)



# Story of the Violin

But to follow his career in chronological order: in 1805-8 we find Paganini engaged at the Court at Lucca, where he wrote his famous sonata (Napoleone) on the G string; and for the next twenty years he travelled and lived exclusively in his native land. In 1828, at the invitation of Count Metternich, he appeared for the first time in Vienna, and from there began really his unparalleled tour of triumphs. People presently

became Paganini-mad. Young and old, musical and unmusical, were seized by this raging fever of hero-worship, and the same symptoms followed his appearance in Leipzig, Berlin, Frankfort, etc., wherever he went. And so he reached Paris and London, where the English next fell victims to the Paganini fever. Enough, in the year 1834 Paganini returned to his country. He had amassed a large fortune, but was physically completely exhausted. Bad investments and financial losses into which he had been led by some swindlers, and the resulting worry rather hurried the process of dissolution which already set in. Vainly he sought relief in Nice and elsewhere, and on May 27th, 1840, he died at the villa of a friend, where he had been nursed in this, his last illness. His fortune fell to his only and illegitimate son Achilles, as also his collection of violins. His favourite fiddle (Fig. 37), however, a superb Joseph Guarneri del Gesù, he bequeathed to his native city Genoa. The precious keepsake is preserved in the upper floor of the Municipio. You are led through the council-chamber, where the official who



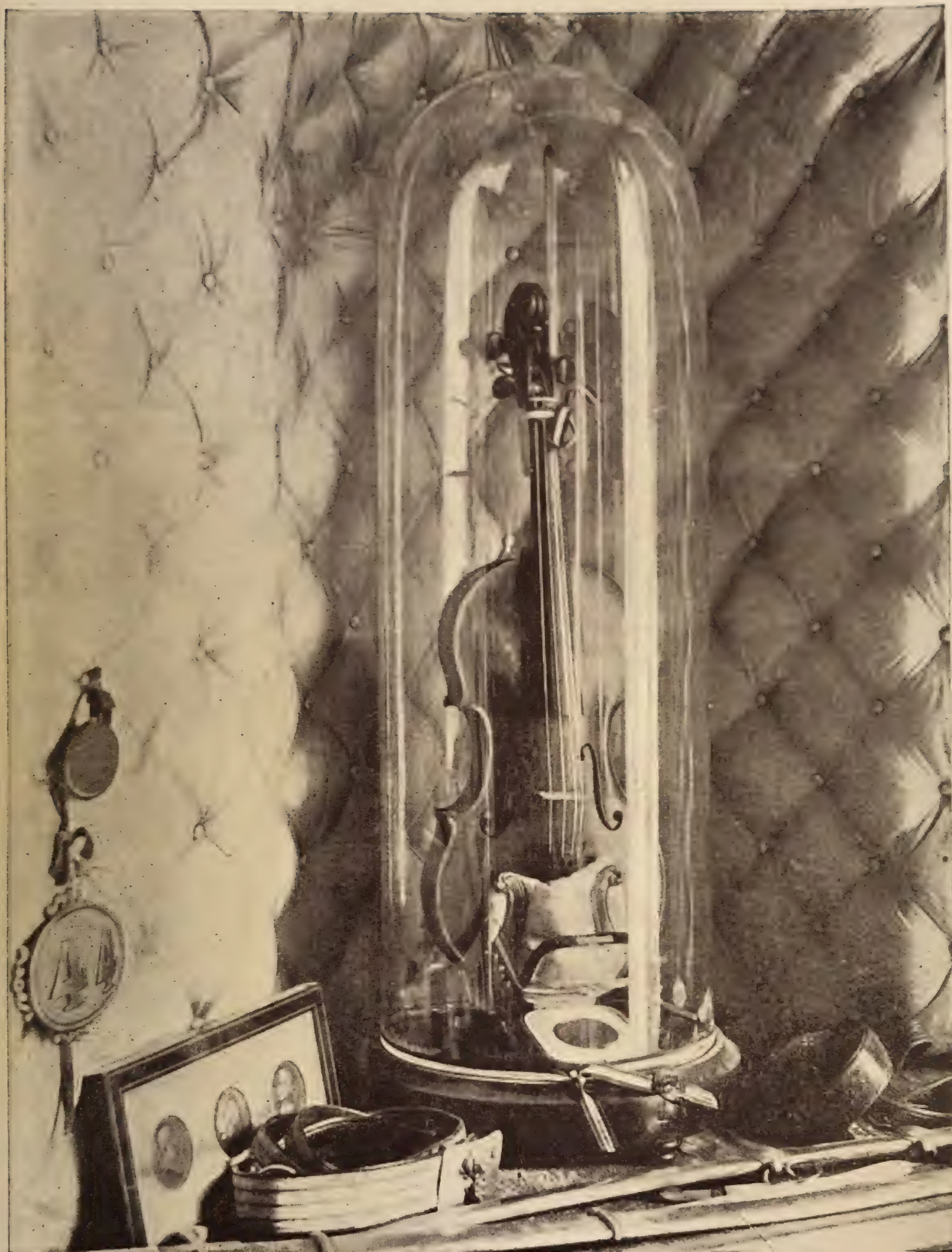


FIG. 37.—PAGANINI'S VIOLIN IN GENOA MUSEUM.

Photo by A. Noack, Genoa.]







# Paganini

is entrusted with guiding the stranger points out to you with pride the portrait-figure of Columbus done in mosaic. In the adjoining room, near the window—so that the sun can watch his opportunity to get a peep at his old friend with you—a door, indistinguishable from the white and gold embossed wall-paper, opens upon a small, blue satin-lined recess in the wall, and lo and behold! in a cylindrical glass case hangs suspended that silent miracle, the fiddle of Paganini.<sup>1</sup>

To be the one and only pupil of such a man, while an exceptional honour, is also a crushing responsibility. Camille Sivori (1815-94), a little man with a prodigious technique and a kind and generous heart, lived his difficult part very well. Like a living memory of his master, he wandered through the world (and he wandered much), and at the last managed to squeeze his violin (a Stradivari) into the satin-lined recess at the Genoa Municipio that it might keep the lonely "Cannon" company. It lies there at the foot of the glass cylinder, but outside the sanctum—still adoring. With Antonio Bazzini (1818-97), whose name to this day has a good ring in fiddlers' ears, we say adieu to Italy, leaving her to rest on her richly-deserved laurels, and turn our attention to Germany.

<sup>1</sup> For a minute description of it the reader is referred to Heron Allen's *Fidicula Opuscula*. The contributions to the Paganini literature are numerous. See *Vita di Nicolò Paganini*, by G. Conestabile; Fétis, *Paganini*; Fayolle; G. Dubourg (anecdotes chiefly); Wasielewski, *Violine und ihre Meister*; Lahe; Ehrlich, *Berühmte Geiger*; Guhr, *Paganini's Method of Playing the Violin*, etc.



## CHAPTER VII.

### VIOLIN ART IN GERMANY.

THE Thirty Years' War had left Germany in a bad condition: her people poor, her crops destroyed, her land hacked up into a hundred and one principalities, ruled (nay, in some cases bled) by men, dukes, princes, counts, and kings, who, with very few exceptions, aped the King of France, Louis XIV., in wanton dissipation and extravagance. Versailles and Paris were the patterns which every princeling tried to imitate at home, too often at a cost quite out of keeping with his means. Yet these sore conditions proved a boon in one direction. The same courts, small and large, too often hotbeds of intrigue, scandal, and extravagance, became the nurseries of music and of violin-art in Germany.

As early as 1626 we found Carlo Farina at the Dresden Court. And soon after, with Farinelli at Italian Hanover, Torelli at Anspach, and Corelli Violin Art at the Bavarian Court, heading a long list, carried we see the great Italian maestri flocking into the into Germany, engaged at this or that court Heart of for a long or short time, as soloists, con- Germany ductors, leaders, organisers, as court-composers and court-musicians. Their art, new and



## Violin Art in Germany

astonishing, gave additional splendour to the court. Italian fiddling, like Italian singing, was the fashion, though the cases were also not rare where reigning princes really loved music and played themselves.

This preponderance of Italian violin-art in Germany, speaking now of the seventeenth and the early part of the eighteenth centuries, is not surprising. The country had little to offer in the way of competition with these clever foreigners. Her sons were only then learning from them the art, and it took long before they left the foreigners' apron-strings. Besides, the social conditions in Germany were anything but favourable to a free and lofty development of native artistic violin-playing, such as Italy could boast at the time. It was hindered everywhere by the barriers which a still surviving mediæval feudalism had erected for the home musician. No splendour-loving, rich, and generous Church openly fostered the art, or by offering honourable and lucrative positions to the soloist, spurred him on or gave him a social standing worthy of the dignity of his art.

The German violinist was before all an orchestra-playing machine, at the will, good or bad, of some terrorising potentate with undisguised predilections for the foreigners in his employ, who were more independent, and therefore more respected. In many cases he was little more (and often less) than the chief lackey of his Highness. His education also, if we except the isolated cases where a generous patron furnished him with the means to study in Italy, was either one within



# Story of the Violin

the narrow circle of his home court orchestra, or in the lower regions of the "Stadt pfeiferei,"<sup>1</sup> that sordid relic of the master-singer period. In other words, the development of violin-art was not, as in Italy during the time of Corelli, Somis, and Tartini, a free and happy radiation from some great artistic individuality; it was an anxious crystallising in the ante-chambers, as it were, of a potentate.

What stronger proof of the different regard in which the musician was held in Italy and in Germany at the time can be adduced than that Corelli was buried in the Pantheon in Rome, while Haydn fifty years later ate in the servants' room at Count Esterhazy's country seat; or that the amiable Archbishop of Salzburg ordered his cook to throw young Mozart down the backstairs of the palace when that young Master Impudent inconvenienced his lordship by asking for a situation?

German It took such a giant as Beethoven—nay, it  
Violin- took the great French Revolution and its  
playing consequences—to make a breach in this  
in the 17th Chinese wall of surviving terrorism.  
and 18th Violin-playing in Germany in the seven-  
Centuries teenth and eighteenth centuries, therefore,  
of whatever influence it may have been on the develop-

<sup>1</sup> The so-called "Stadt-pfeifer" (town-piper) had (and in many instances has yet) the monopoly over the musical supplies in small towns. He kept in pay and board, and a state of absolute dependence, mere boys, who learned to keep time by being given the drum to beat time at dances, and the experienced hand on half-a-dozen instruments. The "Stadt pfeiferei" was therefore little less than a grinding slavery.



## Violin Art in Germany

ment of instrumental music generally, fails to interest the non-specific historical student in the same degree as the contemporary art in Italy. Comparatively few men stand out as prominent, and their work is only more or less a reflection of that all-powerful Italian influence.

Thomas Baltzer (born 1630 at Lübeck, died in London 1663) came to England in 1656, and was appointed leader of the king's band. It is said that he was a remarkable player in his day. As German contemporaries of Corelli may be mentioned:—Johann Fuchheim and Joh. Jacob Walther, both connected with the Dresden Court in the second half of the seventeenth century; Franz Heinrich Biber (1638-98), capellmeister at Salzburg. Nicolaus Adam Strungk (1640-1700) is interesting, inasmuch as he was one of the first German violinists who went to Italy to study. Daniel Theophil Treu (born 1695 at Stuttgart) received likewise his education from Vivaldi in Venice, where he had been sent by the Duke of Würtemberg. Georg Philipp Teleman (1681-1767), music director in Hamburg, is notorious for his fabulous fertility as a composer. He turned out compositions as a baker his loaves, though hardly any have survived.

Still under Italian influence, violin-playing in Germany became artistically somewhat more satisfactory after the first decades of the eighteenth century.

The first man here to attract our attention is Joh. Georg Pisendel (1687-1755), who, as concert-master at



# Story of the Violin

the Dresden Court, put his Italian training (with Torelli, and later with Vivaldi and Montanari) to excellent use. He was largely responsible for

The Dresden Court the enviable reputation which orchestral playing in the Saxon capital enjoyed all over Germany. With Pisendel's pupil, Joh. Gott-

lieb Graun (—, died 1771), whom we already found among Tartini's pupils, the prestige of Dresden in violin-playing was transferred to Berlin, where Frederick the

Berlin Court Great, a devoted lover of music, had meanwhile succeeded to the throne. Graun was leader of the Berlin Court orchestra. Still

more important than Graun, and, indeed, one of the best players of his time and most sympathetic figures in the history of early German violin art, was Franz Benda (1709-86), who succeeded Graun as concert-master in Berlin. Born as the son of a poor Bohemian weaver (by birth, therefore, of Slavic origin), and for the most part self-taught on the violin, Benda had to taste some of the bitterness of life before he attained to his high position. His playing was greatly admired by his contemporaries, particularly in music of the adagio style, which he rendered with beautiful tone and most touching expression. Among his numerous pupils was Wilhelm Rust (1739-96), music director at Dessau, and known as the composer of the fine sonata published in Peter's edition. Of interest to Londoners in particular in this connection is Joh. Peter Salomon (1745-1815), who was temporarily identified with the Prussian capital before 1781. He became a central



## Violin Art in Germany

figure in London musical life, and is said to have been the first who attempted Bach's sonatas for violin solo in public.

Next to the Courts of Dresden and Berlin, and of not less consequence for the development of violin-playing in Germany, appears the Court at Mannheim.

Here we meet first with Joh. Carl Stamitz (born 1719 in Bohemia, died 1767) and his best pupil, Christian Cannabich (1731-97). The  
Mannheim  
Court

To Cannabich is attributed the introduction into German orchestras of many of the orchestral effects which, since then, have become common property—viz., the uniform use of staccato and legato effects—sforzandos, crescendos, and decrescendos. He probably brought these novelties from Italy (Naples), where Jomelli reigned, the greatest orchestral charmer of his time.

A pupil of Stamitz and also of Cannabich was Wilhelm Cramer (father of the famous composer for the pianoforte). He was born in 1745 at Mannheim, and employed there until he came to London to become a rival of Giardini.

Further emanating from this centre of German violin art, the Mannheim school, were:—Anton Stamitz (born 1753), son of Johann Carl, and noteworthy as the teacher of Rudolph Kreutzer. Ignaz Fränzl (born 1736) deserves mention as the master of his son, Ferdinand Fränzl (1770-1853), a celebrity in his day, with a leaning towards the virtuoso. Friedr. Wilhelm Pixis (1786-1842), a pupil of the older Fränzl and of Viotti during the latter's exile at Schoenefeld, near



# Story of the Violin

Hamburg, died much esteemed as professor at the Conservatory of Prague, founded in 1811. Of the two brothers Eck, the last of the scions of the Mannheim school, Joh. Friedr. Eck (born in 1766 at Mannheim) was the more distinguished artist, being considered by some as one of the finest German violinists of the eighteenth century; but his younger brother and pupil, Franz Eck (1774-1809 or 1810), occupies an abiding special place in the history of violin-playing as the teacher of Spohr. Last to be mentioned here, because standing in the traditions of the early Mannheim school, is Leopold Mozart (born in 1719 at Augsburg, died at Salzburg in 1787), father and teacher of the immortal Wolfgang Amadeus, and author of a once famous violin method, the first published in Germany sixteen years after Geminiani's work. He was until his death concert-master and vice-conductor to the Archbishop of Salzburg.

In addition to the hitherto-mentioned German violinists of the eighteenth century, there remain yet a number of artists who formed their individuality independent of the three principal cities, Dresden, Berlin, and Mannheim, by this or that foreign or home influence. We have already made the superficial acquaintance of the three Tartini pupils—Joseph Holzbogen, Anton Kammel, and Lorenz Schmitt; likewise of Anton Janitch (1763-1812), the pupil of Pugnani and a well-known artist in his day. The brothers Cröner were connected with the Munich court orchestra. Franz Lamotte (1757-81) was noted as much for his great



## Violin Art in Germany

talent and *prima vista* playing as for his frivolity, which was boundless. Jacob Scheller (born 1759), the incorrigible who followed in the train of Lolli, ended in the slums of the profession. Michael Ritter von Esser (born 1759) followed in the same rank, but was of a different stamp as artist and man, and rose to wealth and fame. Andreas Romberg (1767-1821), a sound player and composer, died as court composer at Gotha. Next we stand before a man who must be considered Germany's greatest contribution to violin art.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### VIOLIN ART IN GERMANY (*continued*).

ONE of the big names in music—Ludwig Spohr (Fig. 38), a man who fell just short of being a creative genius by the side of our great composers of the romantic school—Schubert, Weber, Ludwig Spohr Mendelssohn, and Schumann! This, however, is not the place to speak of Spohr the composer of big oratorios and symphonies, but simply of the Spohr of the fiddle and Spohr the composer for his chosen instrument.

Awe-inspiring, upright figure of sterling value as man and as artist, towering over his German predecessors and contemporaries of violin fame (as he did in flesh and blood with his six feet in his stockings), *this Spohr*, true Teuton of the fiddle, carried German violin art on his broad back and shoulders across the border into the nineteenth century.

Only two other violin-artists in his life-time rivalled him in importance and far reaching influence—viz., Viotti, thirty years his senior, and his great antithesis in life and art principles, Paganini.

Spohr (born in 1784) was the son of a physician at Brunswick, in North Germany. Young Spohr enjoyed



## Violin Art in Germany

the inestimable advantage of a musical home, without being—as is so often the case with children of professional musicians—from the tenderest age already trained for and driven into the profession. He was something of a prodigy, for even

His Youth



FIG. 38.—SPOHR.

at the age of six, with the help of a French emigrant named Dufour, a clever amateur 'cellist, he was able to take part in Kalkbrenner's trios. Dufour, recognising



## Story of the Violin

the talent of the boy, urged his becoming a musician. Spohr studied in Brunswick, where in theory an organist, Hartung (and Mozart's scores), and on the violin first a certain Kumisch and subsequently the concert-master of the court orchestra, Maucourt, became his teachers. Later he became the pupil of Franz Eck, with whom he spent a year's apprenticeship travelling. At the end of that time he had the good fortune to hear Pierre Rode, the greatest of Viotti's pupils, whose playing gave him a new impetus for work and progress.

We may quickly pass over our master's further career. A second, or rather real first, concert tour, undertaken soon after his apprenticeship, through Prussia and Saxony, won for him golden opinions from the press, and from then till his final appointment as Court Capell-meister at Cassel he passed from milestone to milestone of success, distinguishing himself as soloist and composer as well as an orchestral leader and conductor. I only mention his temporary engagements at Gotha (1806-13), at Vienna (1813-15), and his tours between times through North and South Germany and Italy, where (at Venice) he met Paganini and played a double concerto of his (Spohr's) composition with this great artistic antagonist.

Spohr's extraordinary popularity in England is well known. While in Paris he and his music found only a cool reception, it was with the English public a mutual attraction on both sides from the first (an appearance



## Violin Art in Germany

at a Philharmonic concert in 1820), and to England the master returned frequently and with particular fondness, both to play and conduct his large orchestral and choral works.

In 1822 Spohr entered on his duties in Cassel, and in spite of many annoyances and indignities to which he was subjected, he retained his post until 1857, when he was pensioned off against his will. That same year he had the misfortune to break his arm, an accident which put an end to his violin-playing, and two years later, on October 22nd, 1859, he died.

The years at Cassel proved Spohr's greatest period of productivity, about two hundred works in all having come from his pen, among them many for the violin, besides his famous violin method.

In Cassel he also gathered around him numerous pupils, the best known of whom are: David, Ries, Bargheer, Kömpel, Bott, St. Lubin, and the two English violinists, Blagrove and Henry Holmes. His personality was as fine and commanding as his character was distinguished for integrity, Spohr the straightforwardness in all his sayings and Man doings, and a fine feeling for the right dignity of his art and person. Numerous stories and anecdotes about him demonstrate these character traits.<sup>1</sup>

Spohr the artist, the composer, was a fitting counterpart to Spohr the man. Possessed of the highest art ideals, and in proportion averse to every-

<sup>1</sup> For particulars of Spohr's life, his views on art and artists of his time, the reader is referred to the master's interesting autobiography.



# Story of the Violin

thing opposed to or not reconcilable with these ideals, the trivial, frivolous, the mere ear-pleasing and public-catching, never for an instant could beguile Spohr the Composer his muse away from the path his strong individuality (and a certain Teutonic unpromising obstinacy) had clearly marked out for it. Everything in his works, be it his violin concertos or duets, his small pieces or large creations, is "gediegen," scholarly, noble, masterly in the form, melodious, pleasing and, except for certain chromatic mannerisms, interesting and original. But his strength was also his failing.

Genius nowhere gets the better of the artist; inspiration nowhere gallops away with his muse and we after it in a mad rush, holding our breath and forgetting aught else. Spohr is always *en évidence* in his melodies or his passages. He paints in mezzotints, the fiery Turner red is ever absent; his art lacks happy contrasts, rhythmical variety; it is a low burning fire, never a blaze which makes you feel aglow.

I can imagine that his playing had the same characteristics. It is said to have been distinguished by the marvellous command of the finger-board, His Playing by the large, powerful hand, and by an unfailing intonation, as well as a tone which even in intricate, quick passages (in which his concertos abound) preserved its breadth and beauty, and in slow movements spoke with rare tenderness and refined feeling. The fire of Viotti, however, was lacking, and so was the infinite variety which comes with the



## Violin Art in Germany

piquancies of the bow (which were antagonistic to him). His was the solemn pace of the heavily-built knight in his massive armour of high ideals.

This, his all too strongly marked, uncompromising individuality, both as composer for his instrument and as executant, was no doubt the reason why Spohr never really formed an epoch-making school, or had followers who further expanded on his style. Even the greatest of his pupils, Ferdinand David, His Pupils was anything but a true Spohrite; his playing being more French than Spohric. Then, as to composition, Spohr's style truly lived and died with him—except, we wish to say, that Bernhard Molique gave something of a weak second edition to it. The best representatives, it is said, of Spohr's style were his two pupils, Jean Joseph Bott (born 1826 at Cassel; died in America, 1895) and August Kömpel (born in Bavaria, 1831; died at Weimar, 1891); but neither of these artists played an important part in the further development of violin art in Germany. That distinction belongs chiefly to Ferdinand David.

Ferdinand David, born at Hamburg in 1810, early became Spohr's pupil; but he seems to have been possessed to a rare degree of the power of assimilating other influences without losing his own individuality. His style was a happy blend of lightness, elegance, and solidity; and in his compositions he combined sound musicianship with graceful melodic invention and rhythmical piquancy. Distinguished equally as quartet player and soloist, at

Ferdinand  
David



# Story of the Violin

home in the deep waters of Bach and Beethoven, and in the surface rollers of the modern virtuosi, an unexcelled orchestral leader and inspiring teacher, David was indeed a very great power in his day. And if we remember that, with Mendelssohn and Schumann and the founding of the Leipzig Conservatorium in 1842, the centre of gravity in matters musical in North Germany was shifted for a time to Leipzig, it is not surprising that violin art under David's auspices drifted in the same direction.

His pupils were as numerous as were Tartini's. We find them to this day in leading positions everywhere in Germany and elsewhere. The greatest of His Pupils them, August Wilhelmj (born 1845), lives yet in our midst after a career of international triumphs, devoting his declining years to showing a younger generation how to become great fiddlers.

After David's death (1873), notwithstanding that his post at the Leipzig Conservatorium has been ably filled by such men as Henry Schradieck, Adolph Brodsky (now at Manchester), and Arno Hilf—the lead in German violin art gradually but irresistibly drifted to Berlin, where Joseph Joachim reigned in absolute supremacy. This great master brings us to a sphere of influence of which I purposely speak last. It is the

School of Vienna. Certain national characteristics, blended with Hungarian tinges, have given this school a stamp of its own. Its development was also different from that of the other German centres of violin-playing. It was tardier,





FIG. 38.—JOACHIM QUARTET.

*Joseph Joachim*







## Violin Art in Germany

in spite of the fact that Dittersdorf, Haydn, and Mozart gave to instrumental music at the Austrian capital such a wonderful impetus. Or was it because of this fact, this popularity, as it drew the interest away from a specific cultivation of the violin as a solo instrument into the broader bed of concerted music? At all events, although Karl Dittersdorf (1739-99) and Anton Wranitzky (1760-1808) are commonly named as the early founders of the Vienna School of violin-playing, it became important only at the beginning of the nineteenth century with two men, eminent in their line, Joseph Mayseder (1789-1863) and Joseph Böhm (1795-1876). The former, a pupil of Ignaz Schuppanzigh (of Beethoven fame), gave us among others Miska Hauser (1822-87). Böhm, a Hungarian and presumably a pupil of Rode, became the master of a whole galaxy of violinists known to fame, viz.:—Georg Hellmesberger (1800-73), Jacob Dont (1815-88), Edmund Singer (born 1831), Eduard Reményi (1860-98), Eduard Rappoldi (1839-1903), Jacob Grün (born 1837), Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst (1814-65), and Joseph Joachim (born 1835 at Kitsin). The last two, both Hungarians, are the jewels in Böhm's crown.

Wilhelm Ernst was one of the first who kindled his flame at the fire of Paganini. As a youth of fourteen he was studying with Böhm in Vienna when that conjurer from Genoa appeared and drew him into his magic circle. Next, young Ernst followed like a shadow the great magician on his tours and learned some tricks

Heinrich  
Wilhelm  
Ernst



# Story of the Violin

from him, but fortunately his talent was sufficiently strong and original not to go under, in the greater individuality of his ideal. While in his "Carnival de Venice," etc., he strikes the key-note of the Paganini imitator, his Elegy and many other compositions speak a language quite Ernst's own. Some of his melodies, indeed, are like flowers set in daintiest china vases;

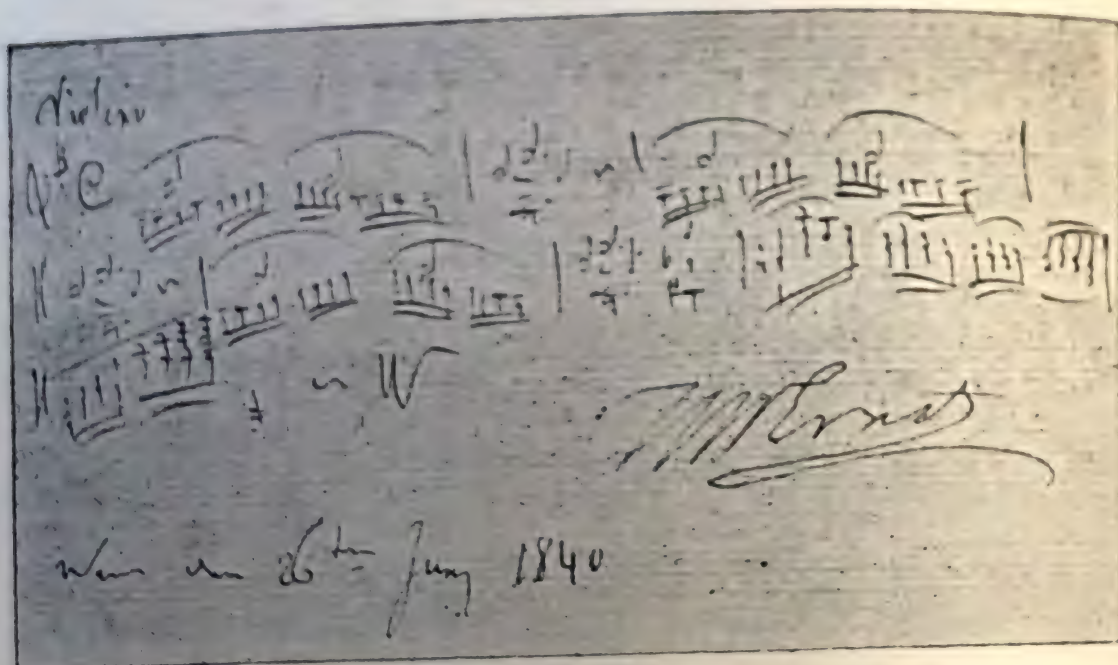


FIG. 39.—FACSIMILE OF A MANUSCRIPT BY ERNST.  
(At the Imperial Library in Berlin.)

flowers with the perfume and the colours of the Orient. Ernst's art and playing was, if I may say so, Paganini's art spiritualised, its echo with a ring of sadness. A great artist and pathetic figure, H. W. Ernst will go down to posterity (Fig. 39). He never held a position or stayed anywhere long, but, like the gipsies of his native land, went about, with his soul on fire, playing



## Violin Art in Germany

his magic fiddle until a long-threatening spinal affection ended his life at Nice in 1865.

Böhm, the master of this ideal of the virtuoso (Ernst), was also the master of that ideal of an interpreter of the classics, Joseph Joachim. It shows that a teacher can—nay, should—only do so much and not more. He may, like the sculptor

Joseph  
Joachim

as it were, hew out of the raw block the general form and outline of his statue; inherited disposition, circumstances, etc., will then give it its feature, life, beauty, and character. Joachim is, perhaps, the most remarkable figure in modern violin art; to do anything like justice to his importance would far exceed the space at my command. Great as executant, great as teacher, great as quartett player, every way one looks at him artistically, and without blemish as a man, he deserves a place beside the noblest artists of our noble instrument. Not meteoric like Paganini or the lesser stars which followed in his track and shed lustre on their path for a season, Joachim came to stay like a good light-giving fixed star, around which to this day revolves a whole planetary system of students, past-students, imitators, admirers, and reflectors of his style.

A Light-  
giving  
Fixed Star

As executant he must rightly claim the distinction of having raised to its highest possible level purely reproductive art. To fully appreciate his merit in this direction we need only, by way of comparison, recall the life-work of such men as Viotti, Rode, Spohr, whom we style the classical masters. All of these were before all else exponents of



## Story of the Violin

their own individuality, their own music. They played occasionally the works of others (quartetts), but it was the exception, not the rule. With Joachim, on the contrary, although a composer of acknowledged merit (Hungarian Concerto), his chosen path lay in interpreting in as objective a manner as possible all that is best in violin literature. His interpretation of Beethoven and Bach was once held to be the unapproachable ideal. If to-day sometimes the message is lost, or obscured by the method, let the violin world rejoice that it still calls Joachim her own—him who once enjoyed the friendship of Mendelssohn. Ah, it almost takes one's breath away to think that he looked into those large, luminous brown eyes, which shone into this world like two stars out of the true wonderland of melody.



## CHAPTER IX.

### VIOLIN-PLAYING IN FRANCE DURING THE SEVENTEENTH, EIGHTEENTH, AND EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURIES.

COMING to France, we find the early stages in the development of violin art still less promising than in Germany; moreover, violin-playing and composition remained longer in an embryonic state. This phenomenon is the more surprising, as the political and social conditions in France in the second half of the seventeenth century seem, on first thoughts, to have been so much more favourable to a rapid progress of this charming art than in Germany.

Louis XIV. had drawn around his Court a galaxy of artists and literary men. His reign marked the great classical period in French history. Racine, Corneille, Molière, La Fontaine, Boileau, Poussin—like so many bright candles around a throne—blended their fame with that of their great king. Music, too, was—in the eyes of the world, at least—worthily represented, and enjoyed the sunshine of the sovereign's favour. There was the so-called "Grande Bande des 24 Violons du Roi," or "Les Vingt-quatre Ordinaires de la Musique de la Chambre



# Story of the Violin

du Roi," founded by Charles IX. (Fig. 40); and Lully, with the permission of the King, organised in addition "La petite Bande," of the same number of

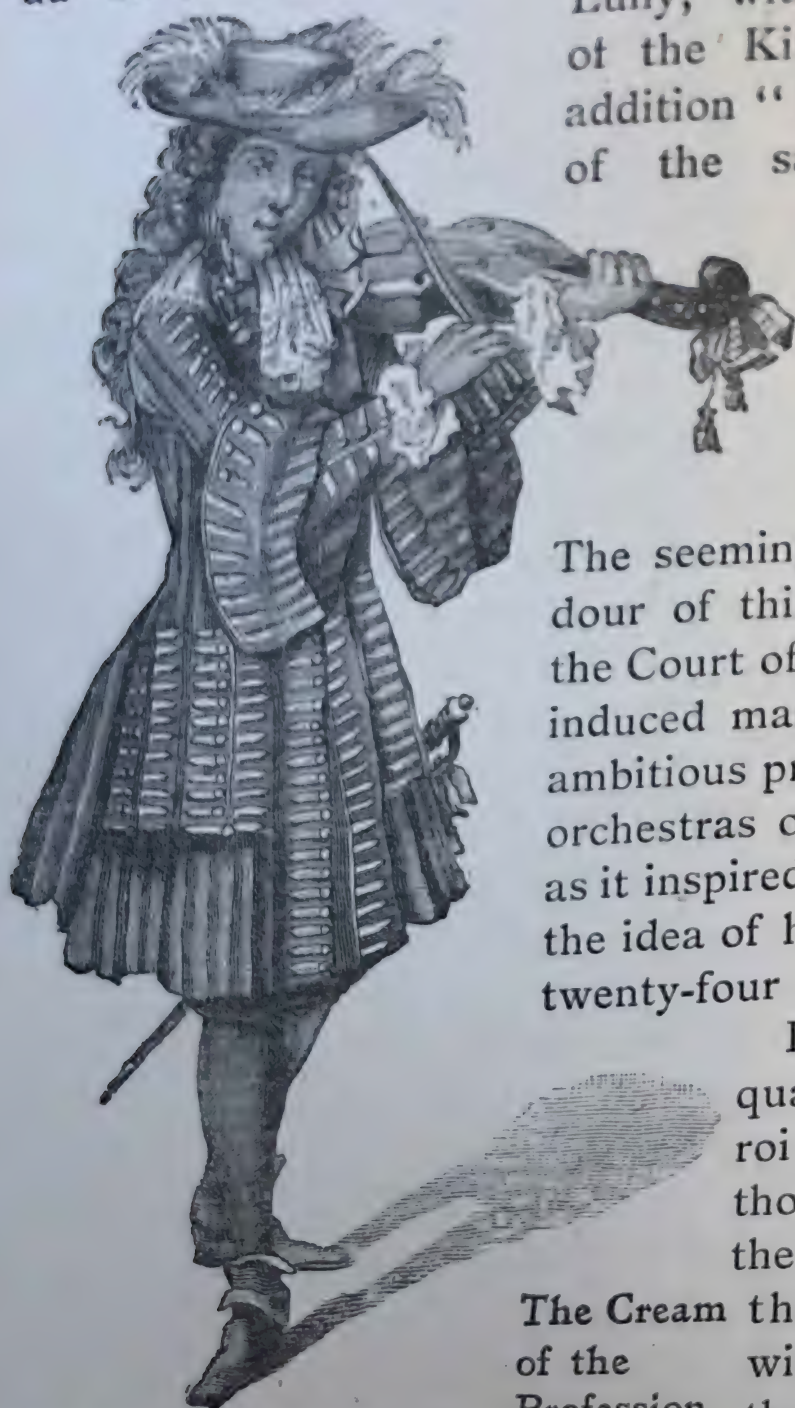


FIG. 40.—ONE OF THE "VINGT-QUATRE VIOLONS" DU ROI.

players, whose duty it was to perform the music for the ballet and at Court festivities.

The seeming outward splendour of this musical life at the Court of Louis very likely induced many of Germany's ambitious princelings to keep orchestras of their own, just as it inspired Charles II. with the idea of his royal band of twenty-four violins.

But these "vingt-quatre ordinaires du roi"—though they thought themselves the very cream of

The Cream the profession, of the with the conceit Profession that is born of exclusiveness and self-indulgence—seemed not to have been in a hurry to change



## Violin Art in France

their music and standard of playing for the more serious, higher one of the Italian masters.

Corelli's failure in Paris shows significantly that something was wrong.

Corelli's  
Failure

The monopoly which Lully and his band held over Parisian musical life (which meant the musical life of France) was too sweet to be easily wrenched from them. They went on in the same old rut as long as they could—that is, as long as the King and his Court were satisfied. Thus it came to pass that, while Germany could already pride herself on a line of excellent Italian art-bred violinists by the beginning of the eighteenth century, in France the art was still in an undeveloped state of infancy. As a proof may serve the fact that, at the end of the seventeenth century *vocal* music was yet used for the *instrument* by these excellent “twenty-four,” as in mediæval times; and matters stood little better during the first half of the following century.

The Use of  
Vocal  
Music for  
Instruments

The first French violinists (*not* violists) we meet are two “Rois des Ménétriers”: Constantin, a member of Louis XIII. Court-orchestra (died 1657), and his pupil, Guillaume Dumanoir, who followed in the dignity of kingship in 1659. After Lully, who was made chief of the band (though he was not Roi des Ménétriers<sup>1</sup>) in 1652, and died in 1687, we come to Rebel,

The Names  
of First  
French  
Violinists

<sup>1</sup> The dignity of “Roi des Ménétriers” was quite independent of the position in the King's band.



## Story of the Violin

François Francour, and Baptiste Anet. The last-named was the first who tried and failed in the attempt to introduce into Paris the art and art principles of Corelli, whose pupil he was. The antagonism of the "twenty-four" drove him to Poland, where he died, an exile for his artistic convictions. Somewhat better fared his pupil, Baptiste Senaillé<sup>1</sup> (born 1687, died 1730), who had become imbued with Italian traditions during a several years' engagement at Modena. The same was the experience of the most important and greatest of early French violinists, Jean Marie Leclair —at least as far as outward immediate success is concerned. By his work and example he succeeded nobly in planting the best Italian art principles on French soil. Leclair was for two years a pupil of Somis in Turin. On his return to France the "twenty-four," as usual, objected to the introduction of unwelcome new ideas; but charitably, by way of compensation for his superior attainments, he was given an inferior position in the grand chorus of the opera, with a salary of four hundred and fifty francs, for which he was supposed to play in the ballet and accompany the chorus. After some years of drudgery in this position—unworthy of his talents—he resigned, and lived henceforth in retirement as teacher, and composer for his instrument. This excellent artist was assassinated in the streets of Paris on the evening of October 22nd, 1764. He was born in 1697, at Lyons. Many of

<sup>1</sup> Also known by a charming little sonata published among Alard's *Maîtres Classiques*.



## Violin Art in France

Leclair's compositions are counted among the best productions of the pre-Viotti French violin art.

Passing here as of secondary importance the names of Jacques Aubert (died 1753), Guillemain (1705-70), Jean Joseph Cassanea de Mondonville (1715-73), and Antoine Dauvergne (1711-97), as well as the three Tartini pupils already mentioned—André Noel Pagin (born 1721 in Paris), Pierre Lahoussaye (1735-1818), and Joseph Touche-

Pierre  
Gaviniés

moulin (1727-1801), we come to the best known of French violinists of the eighteenth century, Pierre Gaviniés. He is usually considered the founder of the earlier (as compared to the post-Viotti) national French school of violin-playing. To the fiddle world at large his importance is centred chiefly in his twenty-four *Matinées* or *Caprices*, which to this day have their assured place in the educational diary of the violinist. The composer, it is affirmed, wrote them in his seventy-third year, and played them himself. In that case his dexterity must indeed have been quite extraordinary, as they are technical stumbling-blocks for the left hand of many a younger player to this day.

Gaviniés was born May 11th, 1728, at Bordeaux. Nothing is known of his youth. He may have been his own teacher, and later profited from and formed his style on hearing Italian masters; at all events, at the age of thirteen he appeared at a *concert spirituel* in Paris, and aroused general interest. Later he undertook the direction of these concerts, and on the founding of the Paris Conservatoire de Musique in 1794



## Story of the Violin

he was made a professor of the violin. He died in 1800, full of honours, admired and revered. The best known of his numerous pupils were: L'Abbé Robineau<sup>1</sup> and Capron, the teacher of Marie Alexandre Guénin (born 1744, died 1819).

French violinists of reputation in their day were, further: Hippolite Barthelemon (1741-1808), also known in England for his fine rendering of Corelli; Isidore Berthaume (1752-1820), and his pupil, Jean Jacques Grosset, who succeeded Gaviniés at the Conservatoire; Mathieu Frédéric Blasius (died 1829), also professor at the Conservatoire; Alexandre Jean Boucher, a celebrity with a flaw, already mentioned; Hubert Julien (born 1749) and Guillaume de Navoigille (born 1745), Leblanc, and La Croix (1756-1812).

<sup>1</sup> Alard's *Maîtres Classiques*.



## CHAPTER X.

### VIOLIN ART IN FRANCE (*continued*).

VIOTTI once called Gaviniés the French Tartini. With more right France might have applied the compliment to Viotti himself. Although born in Italy, the master gave the benefit of his ripe talents not to his native land, but to its neighbour, France. With him, the bulk of the legacy of Corelli, Tartini, and Pugnani slipped across the Italian border. While barely known at home—unlike Tartini, “il maestro della nazione,” as he was called—Viotti became “le maître de la grande nation.” In France his genius reached its glory; in France he was adored and spoiled—yes and happy too, before misfortune took a nip at his heart; in France also he taught and left to a circle of gifted and devoted pupils not only his own precepts safely guarded, but the best tradition of the classical past.

With Viotti, therefore, begins the illustrious period in French violin art, and the lustre has to this day not passed away from it, although much of it has since fallen on the younger sister represented by the Belgian school of violin-playing. The best-known pupils of Viotti were Jean Baptist Cartier (1783-1841), August Frédéric Durand

Viotti and  
French  
Violin Art

Illustrious  
Period



# Story of the Violin

(born at Warsaw, about 1770), André Robberegts (1797-1860), the teacher of Charles de Bériot; Philippe Libon (born at Cadiz, in 1775; died in Paris,

Best-known 1838); also Louis, Julien, Castels de Labarre

Pupils of (1771), Alday le jeune (born 1764), and the Viotti lady violinist Parravicini (born 1769, at

Turin), who enjoyed a great reputation between 1797 and 1804; and above all Pierre Rode, born at Bordeaux

Rode in 1774. After having from his eighth to his fourteenth year received instruction on

the violin from a clever violinist, Joseph Fauvel, young Rode came to Paris, where he became Viotti's pupil.

It is needless to comment on Rode's position as violinist and composer. Every student knows him to be the

second in that bright cluster of stars: Viotti, Rode, and Kreutzer. His finely sensitive nature, which shows

itself in his compositions, is described by Baillot in the

Rode's few sympathetic words regarding Rode's

Playing playing: "It was full of charm, purity, and

elegance, and quite expressed the lovable

qualities of his mind and heart." He died at Bordeaux

on November 25th, 1830, after a most brilliant career,

though not spared some bitter disappointments.

In Rudolph Kreutzer we meet not with a pupil, strictly speaking, of Viotti, but an artist who no more than

Rudolph Rode was able to resist the influence of the

Kreutzer great Italian, which he blended with his own

individuality. He was born on November

16th, 1766, at Versailles, as the son of a musician, who

also gave him the first instruction on the violin; and



## Violin Art in France

later, it is noteworthy, he became the pupil not of any representative of the French violin school, but of Anton Stamitz, a brother of the founder of the Mannheim school, who had moved to Paris. Under Stamitz's guidance young Kreutzer's talent for the violin as well as his gifts for composition developed at a remarkable pace. Taking Viotti as his model, he eventually rose to the highest positions attainable to a violinist in Paris. First, he was appointed second professor at the Conservatoire, and on Rode's resignation, took the latter's place, at the same time occupying various other honourable positions. In spite of this strenuous official life, Kreutzer found time to compose and travel. During one of these concert tours, he met Beethoven in Vienna, who dedicated to him his famous violin sonata, Opus 47. Contemporaries speak in the highest terms of Kreutzer as an executant, but what gave him his unique position in the history of violin-playing was his work as a composer. His forty studies are a household word with violin students all over the world, a standard work which no other one of the kind has ever been able to reach. Not quite so popular but still of great pedagogic value are his concertos, of which he wrote twenty-one. With this respectable productive *facit* to his credit, his fertility as a composer, however, was by no means ended. Besides fifteen string quartetts, fifteen trios for two violins and 'cello, and duets, etc., he wrote no less than thirty-six operas, among which were thirteen for the

Kreutzer's  
Playing

His Forty  
Studies



## Story of the Violin

grand opera. Nearly all of these are antiquated or forgotten. He died in Geneva on June 6th, 1831. The best of his many pupils was Charles Lafont (1781-1839), who became one of the foremost virtuosos of his day. Another pupil, Pietro Rovelli (1793-1838), is distinguished as the teacher of Bernard Molique.

There remains yet to speak of one other man who, like Rode and Kreutzer, stood at the threshold of the nineteenth century, and exercised a most decided and beneficial influence on contemporary and posterior

French violin art—viz., Baillot, with the  
Baillot Christian names Pierre Maria François de Sales. Born in 1771 at Passy, near Paris, Baillot was given a liberal education by his father, an advocate of the Paris parliament. His predilection for the violin, which he indulged at first unassisted and then under the guidance of a clever, painstaking teacher, Saint-Marie, received a great impetus when in 1782 he heard Viotti at a *concert spirituel*. The impression never left Baillot, and though never actually a pupil of the great master, by the right which true sympathy and active, intelligent enthusiasm give he may be called the spiritual pupil of Viotti and heir to his art.

Baillot's early life was a fitting introduction to his later career. It was that of a man who gathers into the granary of his mind and heart whatever comes his way and is worth gathering. As a boy he is taken to Italy, where his father dies and leaves his family in trouble. A kind friend and benefactor sends him with his own children to Rome. Here he has an opportunity





FIG. 41.—THERESE AND MARIE MILANOLLO.



FIG. 42.—PIERRE MARIE FRANÇOIS BAILLOT DE SALES.







## Violin Art in France

of forming his taste and studying the violin with a pupil of Nardini—Pollani. He travels as secretary to his benefactor, he meets Viotti personally, he works "au ministère des finances" in Paris, he is enlisted in the army, etc.; but wherever he is and whatever he does, he pursues his violin studies and gathers knowledge, and one day in the fulness of time he appears in Paris as violinist, and pleases his public so well that he is appointed a professor at the Conservatoire. Here at last, in a position congenial to him and suited to his talents, he can fulfil his mission in life—viz., empty the contents of that granary. He emptied them partly into a work which has made him particularly famous: his *Method de Violon*.<sup>1</sup> This monumental work appeared at the beginning of the new century, and was later followed by a supplement. He also instituted the first regular quartett soirées in Paris, found time to tour, compose, and teach, and spent a long life of usefulness—till his death in 1842, an artist truly worthy of the gratitude of France.

One day Paris woke up to find herself in Paganini's grip, and Paganini's grip was firm. It meant a new phase in French violin art. Vainly Baillot and his pupil Habeneck<sup>2</sup> tried to stem the wave that would roll over old traditions. The national traits of brilliancy, emotion-

<sup>1</sup> Written in collaboration with Rode and Kreutzer.

<sup>2</sup> Habeneck (1781-1849), as founder and conductor of the famous Conservatoire concerts, introduced Beethoven's Symphonies to the Parisians.



# Story of the Violin

alism, of showiness and superficiality, which Baillot, Rode, Kreutzer, had held long in check made a younger fiddle-playing generation an easy victim to the great usurper. We now see in France a lively tug-of-war between the new art and the

## A Lively Tug-of- War

old traditions. On one side pulling hard, such clever men as Delphin Alard (1815-88), Sainton (1813-90), François Prume, D'Artot, Charles Dancla (born 1818), etc.; on the other, the more conservative French elements together with an influence (partially at least) hitherto mentioned only *en passant*, but since Paganini's time much in evidence in France, the Belgian school of violin-playing.

By a happy combination of national characteristics, and the preponderating individuality of its founder,

Charles de Bériot, as well as the exceptional talents of his successors, and by engrafting new, strong elements from time to time,

## Belgian School

this school has been, perhaps, the greatest power, outside Joachim, in the latest stages of violin art. It has, at least, produced within a few decades, one might say, greater violinists than any other since the palmy days of Tartini and Pugnani. Space forbids to go as much into detail on the subject as I should like. Some of the names of representatives of the Belgian school are violinistic household words. Who does not know Charles de Bériot (1802-70), the prototype of grace and elegance as player and composer, and his greatest pupil, Henry Vieuxtemps



## Violin Art in France

(1820-81), one of the giants since the time of Paganini? To him<sup>1</sup> we are largely indebted for another modern giant—Eugène Ysaye (born at Liège, 1858); and to De Bériot for that great virtuoso and sterling artist, Emil Sauret (born 1852), besides Joh. Christian Lauterbach in Dresden, and Teresa Milanollo (born 1827), who with her sister Maria, at one time floated over European concert-stages like a lovely apparition.

The Belgian influence in Paris (Franco-Belgian school) is chiefly represented by Lambert Joseph Massart (born at Liège, 1811; died in Paris, 1892), a pupil of Kreutzer and master of Wieniawski, Lotto, Camilla Urso, Teresina Tua, Joh. Wolff, Kreisler, Charles Loeffler, and many others; while Hubert Léonard (born at Bellaire, near Liège, 1819; died in Paris, 1890), a pupil of Habeneck, taught César Thompson, Marsick, Ovide Musin, Dengremont (born 1867 at Rio Janeiro, died 1893), Henri Marteau, etc.

Belgian  
Influence  
in Paris

From the first a wise moderation has on the whole characterised the representatives of the Belgian school. It was unavoidable that Paganini's art left its mark on it, as on every school and almost every violin artist of his time. But while the French extremist took greedily with both hands, as it were, of these new treasures more than was good for him, and in consequence suffered from technical indigestion and its other symptoms, the cooler Belgian appropriated

Character-  
istics of  
the Belgian  
School

<sup>1</sup> And Wieniawski.



# Story of the Violin

only what he could well and easily amalgamate with the safely-guarded and precious legacy of "his Viotti."<sup>1</sup> Even in such matters as the technicalities of bowing (I address myself here to the student), it is observable how the best Belgian players have exercised moderation and discretion. Note with nearly all of them the low position of the elbow and the upper arm,<sup>2</sup> and the admirable working of the wrist and forearm—both kept at perfect equilibrium and obeying the laws of æsthetics, as well as satisfying any demands made upon them by bowing difficulties. These things have come down from Viotti, who, it is said, was so sensitive to the movements of the bow-arm presenting also lines of beauty, graceful curves instead of ugly corners, that he had a famous sculptor watch him while playing and criticise the movements of his arm. Paganini, self-taught, on the other hand is said to have held the arm abnormally high, in order to better serve his special bowing pyrotechnics.

Through this Belgian influence possibly, or in consequence of the levelling work of time, the tug-of-war between the new and old has almost ceased in France. The once new is new no more; the once thought old grow almost young again. So now the ultra-Frenchman sits with the Spohr-bred Teuton

<sup>1</sup> It will be remembered that the teacher of De Bériot, André Robberechts, was a pupil of Viotti.

<sup>2</sup> "This is to be understood as relatively low, for the position of the upper arm, elbow, and forearm naturally changes with every string."—*The Art of Violin Bowing*, Paul Stoeving; London.



## Violin Art in France

admiring at the feet of Beethoven and of Bach, and both go arm-in-arm to Berlin occasionally to get yet a point or two from that "grand old man" of the fiddle, Joseph Joachim.

Yes, like a stream growing broader and broader, and ever quicker and quicker, when once released from its narrow bed, so has violin art flowed through the nineteenth century. Outlying countries were drawn into the current, swelling it by new elements and energies. We found Hungary infusing some of the fire of her tokay and the moonlit-meadow-poetry of her gipsies into the Austrian mother-stock in Ernst.

Poland,  
Bohemia,  
Norway,  
and Spain

Bohemia gave its share in Kalliwoda (1801-66), Ferdinand Laub (1832-75), Leop. Jansa (the teacher of Lady Hallé), and later Franz Ondricek, Halir, etc.

Poland, king and mazurka-haunted Chopin-land, had already in Paganini's time contributed a violinist of the big calibre, one who stalked in tenths over the fiddle, Charles Lipinski (1790-1861); but now she sent (the heart of fiddlers waxes warm at the mere mention of his name) Henry Wieniawski (1832-80), the glorious virtuoso; and Isidor Lotto (1840); and later Stanislaus Barcevicz (born 1858).

From Norway, with something like an aurora borealis of northern poetry around his head, came, minstrel-like, self-taught, that blue-eyed, blonde-haired Norseman of the fiddle, Ole Bull (1810-80), swaying enraptured audiences on both sides of the Atlantic.



# Story of the Violin

Then Spain sent from her matchless sunny climes on rhythms of Bolero, Malaguena Zapateado, that matchless, sunny artist, Pablo de Sarasate.

And now once more I have to take my reader from this bright and ever-broadening view of the nineteenth century violin art on the European continent back two centuries, to these isles.



## CHAPTER XI.

### VIOLIN ART IN ENGLAND.

AMONG the great European nations, England, it must be conceded, has had but a small share in the development of violin-playing. Her attitude towards this branch of musical art was in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and is yet, to a certain degree, receptive rather than productive. To London flocked these eighteenth-century birds of passage—Italian, German, French—their fame preceding them as the March wind heralds the arrival of our feathered guests in spring. They stayed for a season, feeding on the fat of the land; but few of them—very few indeed—made a nest for themselves in the shadow of St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey, or left an impression strong and permanent enough to produce a greater national activity with respect to violin-playing. Whether the reason for this undeniably unproductive attitude towards this most charming of arts lay in certain national characteristics which make the Englishman to this day a greater lover, generally speaking, of vocal than of instrumental music,—make him appreciate a Handel and the *Messiah* more than Mozart or a *Ninth*



# Story of the Violin

*Symphony* (though I should not like to commit myself on this score)—or whether the reason lay in another direction, dating back to certain old-caste **Prejudices** prejudices, the remnant of a mediæval spirit which found their fitting expression in the well-known and oft-quoted advice of Lord Chesterfield to his son<sup>1</sup>,—I do not venture to decide or even discuss here.

If this noble lord's opinion is to be taken as a fair criterion of the general esteem in which professional fiddle-playing in England was held in those times, it is no wonder that under such existing conditions the better middle-class elements, whose active devotion to the young art would have been of incalculable benefit to it, were withheld. This state of things as regards the earliest stages of violin art in England is all the more surprising, as with Henry Purcell (1656-95) national English music reached for the time its culmination. But then it was chiefly vocal music with Purcell, and after him, Handel's all-powerful influence lay in the same direction.

That England produced, nevertheless, somewhat later, a number of violinists, more or less distinguished, goes without saying. The Geminiani, **Foreign Artists** Giar-dini, Veracini, Cramer, Viotti, etc., could not have helped endearing that sweetest of voices to the English; and gradually the prejudicial cobwebs of earlier centuries were also swept away. Great is now the number of its devotees of both sexes

<sup>1</sup> Hart, *The Violin*—"If you love music, hear it; pay fiddlers to play for you, but never fiddle yourself."



## Violin Art in England

in all classes—greater, probably, than in any other country in the world.

The first English violinist is usually considered to be John Banister (born 1630), in London. He received his first instruction on the violin from his father, one of the waits of the parish of St. Giles, and was sent by Charles II. to France for further study. On his return he succeeded Baltzar, who died in 1663, as conductor of the King's Band, but he fell into disgrace with his monarch and lost his post, owing, it was said, to his outspoken partiality for English compared to French performers on the violin. He subsequently instituted regular concerts at his house, later called the "Musick-School, over against the George Tavern" in Whitefriars, which continued until near his death in 1679.

English  
Violinists :  
17th, 18th,  
and 19th  
Centuries

Both he and Thomas Baltzar lie buried in the cloister of Westminster Abbey. John Banister's son also became a violinist of repute. He lived during the reigns of James II., William and Mary, and Queen Anne.

To these two well-known names representing the earliest phases of violin art in England must be added that of one other not contained hitherto in most musical dictionaries. Sir Frederick Bridge, I believe, first drew the attention of musicians to one Nicola Matteis as possibly the man who first acquainted English musicians with the Italian style of violin-playing and composition, and influenced Purcell in the creation of his violin sonatas. Neither Banister



# Story of the Violin

nor Baltzar could have done so. At all events, it appears from the autobiographical notes of Roger North, a musical amateur, and contemporary of Henry Purcell's father, that among the musicians frequenting the said Roger North's house was a Signor Nicola Matteis, a violinist of remarkable attainments, who for a time made his influence felt in the London musical circles in which Purcell, then a young man, moved. Mattei's abilities on the violin were greatly admired, and among other laudable things it is stated by Roger North that the Italian violinist showed English players for the first time how to hold the bow properly. That surely was a great thing to do for any man whom history has not hitherto marked out as a hero—nay, fails even to mention! Who this mysterious Signor Matteis was, whose pupil, or anything else about his antecedents, Roger North's papers do not reveal. He stayed in London for several years, playing and giving lessons in some aristocratic musical families, and publishing some compositions by subscription; but perhaps the soil was not quite prepared for a violinistic appearance like his. He left London again, and is said to have gone to Paris, where he died in reduced circumstances. Whatever he was, this hitherto unknown prompter of English musical history, there can be little doubt that young Purcell met him at Roger North's house, and, with the inquisitiveness of youth and the eagerness of genius, would naturally have drawn from him the knowledge of the main characteristics of the Italian sonata form into



## Violin Art in England

which he eventually poured the fine, liquid gold of his own inspired muse.

After Signor Matteis's departure, professional violin-playing in London seems to have again taken a long and undisturbed rest, or it was carried on behind closed doors, so that the historian did not get a chance of recording it. As late as 1713, John Playford, in his work entitled "*Introduction to the Skill of Musick*, in three books, containing: I. Ground and principles of music according to the most easy method for young practitioners. II. Instruction and lessons for the treble, tenor, and bass viols, and also for the treble violin. III. The art of descant or composing musick in parts, made very plain and easy, by the late Mr. Henry Purcell"—mentions the violin, together with the various kinds of viols.

The year after, 1714, Geminiani came to London, and the further history of violin-playing in these isles is inseparably connected with the foreign artists already mentioned, from Geminiani down to Spohr and to our own days.

Of English players of the eighteenth century, the honour of *ancienneté* belongs to Matthieu Dubourg (born 1703, in London). He made his first *début* as a boy violinist (standing on a chair so as to be seen) in the crowded historical music-room of John Britton in Clerkenwell. On Geminiani's arrival in the English capital, Dubourg became his pupil, and was subsequently engaged in Dublin and London. Here he died, 1768, as Director of the Royal Music. He is said to have been a



## Story of the Violin

distinguished artist, excelling, particularly, in slow, pathetic music. Dubourg's pupil, John Clegg, according to Gerber, excelled his teacher in dexterity, but through over-work came to a premature and sad end in 1742 as an inmate of the Bedlam Asylum.

Further interesting is: John Abraham Fisher (born in 1744, in London), who also made a name for himself as a virtuoso abroad. I give a translation of Pohl's description of him and his comical method of advertising himself abroad: "A foreign valet in striking livery, carrying a magnificent carmine-red violin-case, richly ornamented with gold, was followed by the celebrated virtuoso, who, walking on tiptoes, was clad in a brown silk attire, with scarlet embroidery and glittering buttons. So high was his powdered and perfumed toupée that his small figure appeared divided into halves. His breeches were held at the knees with diamond buttons, and the scent of perfume filled the atmosphere of the room."

Thomas Linley (born in 1756, at Bath; died in 1778) was a pupil of Nardini. His promising career came to a premature end through the overturning of a pleasure boat.

Of some notoriety must have been General Ashley (died in 1818), a pupil of Giardini. He had the honour of performing Viotti's double concerto in public in London with the master himself.

With the violinist Bridgetower—for whom Beethoven is said to have composed his sonata Op. 47, which he eventually dedicated to Kreutzer—the list of note-



## Violin Art in England

worthy English bow-performers on the violin in the eighteenth century is nearly complete.

Of later date: Henry Blagrove (born at Nottingham, in 1811), who began the study of the violin at four, appeared in public at five, became the pupil of Spohr, was from 1834 leader of the Philharmonic Society concerts, and died in 1872 in London; further, Antonio James Aury, who made a name for himself on a concert tour lasting nine years; and John T. Carrodus, a pupil of Molique, who died in 1869, and is the grandfather of the family of clever violinists of that name.



## CHAPTER XII.

### THE LADY VIOLINIST.

LOVELY flower in fiddle-land! She was born in the South with the first Amatis, Ruggieris, and Seraphins which left their makers' shops in new glossy coats, bursting as it were with melodious life—waiting only for just such soft white hands to be handled and fondled, for exactly such little delicate, shell-shaped ears to pour their caressing voices into, and to rest on just such soft bosoms. She was quickly responsive. Yet—observe: she was a child of the South, with an impulsive artistic nature. It was just such an Amati, Ruggieri, and Seraphin she had longed for; they were the realised ideal of her bosom: so graceful, so light, as easy to the touch as her own heart to the touch of Cupid. Hence it came to pass that we got in all her charms the lady violinist. She flourished in fair Italy<sup>1</sup> while

<sup>1</sup> According to Lord Edgumbe's reminiscences there existed in Venice at the time of Vivaldi (1660-1743) four large musical conservatories. They were orphanages, supported by rich Venetian citizens, where orphan girls received a musical education. One of these, the Ospitale della Pietà (of which Vivaldi was musical director), was particularly noted for its orchestra, which numbered at one time 140 girls



## The Lady Violinist

her sister in the colder North, the golden-tressed maiden, still went about with the bunch of keys hanging from her girdle, in snow-white apron, busy mainly in kitchen and cellar, and only of a Sunday playing the lute and dreamily glancing up at the angel with the fiddle on the bright painted church window. But this changed. Like some flowers which wait for the late summer to wed them, so the maiden of the North found her Amati or her Klingenthal tardily—but she found it. And now? I will not startle you with cold figures (they would be out of place here, methinks), let numbers hide where charm reigns; but go to the next gala concert of our largest music school. Queen's Hall will be crowded, ablaze with light. From where you sit (if you love, as I do, the darker corners in the back), the distant stage, high

In her  
Glory

from among 1000 students, and assisted in the production in church of oratorios, etc. One violinist of fame sprang from this remarkable institution, Regina Strinasacchi or Sacchi (born 1764), for whom Mozart wrote his charming B flat maj. sonata for violin and piano. Of other lady violinists of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries mention has already been made of Maddalena Lombardini-Sirmen, the recipient of Tartini's lessons by correspondence (dated March 6th, 1760); also of Signora Gerbini (born after 1770), a pupil of Pugnani, and Signora Parravacini (born in 1769), pupil of Viotti. But only with the two sisters Teresa and Maria Milanollo, in the forties of the last century, the charm and poetry of violin-playing woman seems to have fully dawned on the world at large. Since then the increase in amateur and professional violinistes has been phenomenal. Madame Norman Neruda (Lady Hallé) set the ball rolling in England, Camilla Urso in America, and around these two stars cluster to-day a very large wreath of fair executants of all nationalities.



## Story of the Violin

and above the large, dark, heavy-breathing mass, will look like a moving, glittering sea of white. The orchestra—all budding *débutantes*! As you listen to the music gently rising, falling, rising,—through your half-closed eyelids and a mist of heat and haze and light—sound and movement melt together; childhood pictures crowd on you; forgotten dreams gain shape and life. You see the heavens open and descending and ascending angels clothed in white with fiddles, viols, 'cellis in their arms, radiant faces looking up in rapture to the source of light and goodness, drawing from it love and inspiration. And softly with them, rising, falling, rising, float the alleluias, amens, alleluias.



## PART III.

### AN OUTLINE OF THE EVOLUTION OF VIOLIN COMPOSITION.

#### CHAPTER I.

##### IN ITS INFANCY.

WHAT the first stammerings on the newly-invented instrument were we cannot tell. ♣ Perhaps as the violin began to supplant the treble viol it took also from it its repertoire, or it borrowed from the slender store of the rebecca, here a romance, a canzona, there an old dance tune, lively or slow. Only from the beginning of the seventeenth century we get glimpses of the musical tendencies to which the new instrument inspired its devotees. On the one hand we see how Monteverde (1607) employed it in his orchestra; on the other we have, still extant, a "Romance for Violin and Bass," published in 1620 in Venice, by Biagio Marini,<sup>1</sup> and some compositions<sup>2</sup> by Carlo Farina, whom we met

Beginning  
of the  
Seventeenth  
Century

<sup>1</sup> Gerber, in his *New Musical Dictionary*, gives a list of additional compositions attributed to Marini, but it seems they are hopelessly lost.

<sup>2</sup> At the Royal Private Library in Dresden.



## Story of the Violin

at the Dresden Court in 1626. Among these—a collection of old dance-tunes and arias, originally set for four parts (although the solo violin part alone has been preserved)—particularly of interest is the concluding quodlibet, entitled *Capriccio Stravagante*. It must have been considered something extraordinary for the time, for the composer says as much in his preface, and at the end of the work gives explicit directions as to the rendition of his opus, including rules for going into the third position (which is twice employed), for playing double stops, the tremolo, the shake, etc., as well as for the proper execution of such feats as the imitating of caterwauling, dog-barking, the drum and fife and the Spanish guitar, all contained in his remarkable work. Even if we were disposed (judging only from this specimen of his muse) to suspect Carlo Farina of having been something of a musical charlatan, a Woldemar in embryo, this capriccio would stand as a valuable document for the stage of violin technique at the time; but there is good reason to believe that the composer was prompted by a perfect earnestness of purpose, as it shows itself in the other pieces of the collection. Not having learned as yet to speak in musical parables, he landed in the crudest forms of tone-picturing as soon as he tried to depart from the stereotyped dance-tunes and arias.

But it is significant that the violin should from



## In its Infancy

the first have invited a departure from the domain hitherto accorded to the viol. The player and composer instinctively felt the hidden possibilities of his instrument and was groping his way towards their realisation. Carlo Farina's example found evidently ready imitators in Germany, for Joh. Jacob Walther (b. 1650), in his *Hortulus Chelicus*, published at Mayence, 1694,<sup>1</sup> strikes the same note in the imitation of the cuckoo, the nightingale, the rooster, and the cackling of hens. Technically though, his productions mark an appreciable advance on Farina's, the fifth position being employed (with one excursion of the fourth finger to the  $\overline{g}$ ), besides showing a very great variety of bowings. More scholarly than either Walther or Farina was Franz Heinrich Biber. In his compositions the desire for individual expression in clear, well-formed musical language is unmistakable.

Imitators  
in  
Germany

Italy's superiority in matters musical presently shows itself. The feeling for form, symmetry, and beauty must be inherent with her people whatever reason we wish to give for it. At all events, while in Germany under the very eyes of Buxtehude

In Italy

<sup>1</sup> The literal title (translated) is "Hortulus Chelicus: that is, well-planted violinistic pleasure garden, wherein all musical amateurs desirous of learning will find the way to perfection smoothened by curious pieces and a most agreeable variety; and also the most charming harmony by touching two, three, and four strings on the violin. Through Joh. Jacob Walther, Italian Secretary to the Elector of Mayence," etc.



# Story of the Violin

and the father of Joh. Seb. Bach violin-composition still lay in its swaddling clothes, kicking up its heels, as it were, in vain struggles to get out of them, we already have in Italy the well-defined Sonata da Camera and Sonata di Chiesa, and the first attempts at the concerto.



## CHAPTER II.

### THE REIGN OF THE SONATA.

DEFINITIONS as to the earliest character of either of these sonatas differ with different writers.<sup>1</sup> But it is fairly safe to say that both had the general features of our suite—*i.e.*, they consisted of several more or less loosely connected movements (usually three or four) all in the same key. In the Sonata da Camera, as its name—chamber sonata—implies, the movements were of a worldly character—light old dance-tunes (balleti), the giga, gavotte, Bourré (minuet); or more serious ones like the allemanda, pavane, corrente, ciaccona, etc.; or also arias, madrigali, canzone, etc. In the Sonata di Chiesa (church sonata) they were: adagios, largos, and allegros (fugues and fugatos)—that is, free contrapuntal inventions adapted for use in connection with the musical services of the church.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Prætorius: *Syntagma*, vol. ii. p. 24; and Sebastian de Brossard: *Musical Dictionary*, 1703.

<sup>2</sup> That there were, independent of these two principal musical forms (to which must also be reckoned Torelli's concerto form, see below), some further compositions of a mixed character, the theme and variation kind, is shown in that remarkable Ciaccona by Thomaso Vitali. It consists of a short characteristic theme and a number of very ingenious,



# Story of the Violin

Although it cannot be said that Corelli invented the violin sonata,<sup>1</sup> at least it was his undying merit to have given it its general outline and character. Corelli and the Sonata This he accomplished by appropriating with the right instinct of genius the best suitable elements at his disposal, moulding them into a logically-connected whole. The working out of the detail of the movements, the enlarging and individualising of them was left to his successors.

Corelli's musical language, whether in the traditional dance rhythms of the sonata da camera, or in the adagios and allegros of the sonata di chiesa, is throughout adapted to the nature of the instrument; noble, dignified, and of rare euphony. Some of his slow movements rise to almost Olympian grandeur, or are full of simple charm and naiveté, while the construction of the allegros is always clear and plastic, be it that the passages (or figurations rather) flavour a little of the *étude*. They seem like a concession that the spirit of the *musica sacra*, which is uppermost in the master, made to worldly conceptions of variety. As if wishing to emphasise the weight and importance of the slow movement as compared to the rest (or perhaps as a proof of the usual mental attitude

finely-contrasting variations, a worthy precursor indeed to that wonderful Ciaccona which forms the concluding movement of Bach's fourth sonata for violin solo.

<sup>1</sup> Giovanni Battista Vitali (1644-92) is usually considered the first master who cultivated the sonata da camera, under the title of Balletti, Balli, Corrente, etc., da Camera.



## Reign of the Sonata

of the composer when he followed the dictates of his muse) he invariably begins his sonatas, even the sonata da camera, with a *grave*. After this *grave* (prelude) follows usually a livelier movement—a corrente or allegro; then again a slow one—an adagio, largo, or sarabande; and another allegro, gavotte, or giga concludes the work. In general Corelli adhered to this plan for his sonatas of either kind, whether written for two violins and bass, as in Op. 3 and 4, or for violin solo with bass, as in Op. 5 (his most popular work); but minor changes are met with at every turn. As an interesting item it may be mentioned that occasionally he writes the slow middle-movement in the parallel key, a proof how finely sensitive the master was to the demands of variety. Besides the sonata form, he cultivated the form of the concerto after the style of Torelli, and in his famous "La Folia," also that of theme and variations. But while the Corelli sonata represents the first great landmark in the evolution of violin composition, for the further and, in a sense, final development of this form of composition we are indebted chiefly to Tartini.

A glance at this master's works reveal the great progress he effected. It is a progress in three directions—viz., in the form, the musical contents, and the technical apparatus employed. The stereotyped made place for the individual, and the individual, by drawing on increased means of expression, expanded the form; and in this process every detail of the product benefited in proportion:

Tartini



# Story of the Violin

the themes gained in breadth and importance, the modulations became freer, and the passages more varied, etc., etc.

Thus we find also that the Paduan master almost discarded the sonata da camera, and instead cultivated the sonata di chiesa and the church concerto, which afforded him the required scope for free invention and thematic elaboration impossible in the old sonata da camera. Besides his muse would have naturally turned to forms in harmony with the church in the service of which he was employed, and to which he was devoted.<sup>1</sup>

Tartini loved these golden chains of the house of God. They were to him not chains to hold him fast to the cold stone-floor, but they drew him up to the lofty dome, or often transformed themselves for him into butterfly-wings of inspiration to soar still higher. Only at times he peeps, as it were, through the high church-windows into the world below, and then his heart is moved with strange earthly passions or feelings. His violin begins to speak another language—the language of the world—full of warmth and tenderness. It is worldly, but not for long; it is worldly without quite daring to be so; even with the devil the master prefers wrestling in front of the altar (note the interludes in the Devil's-Sonata). But how exquisitely tender he can

<sup>1</sup> Fayolle tells that even as an old man Tartini would not let a week pass without playing his customary solo at the church of St. Anthony, and when illness in his last days prevented him from walking, he insisted upon being carried there for that purpose.



## Reign of the Sonata

be! The last movement of his G minor Sonata (formerly called "Dido Abbandonata") is like the "freud voll, leid voll" of a maiden's heart.

Tartini's influence on violin composition was farther reaching than that of any other master of his time. In his track henceforth wandered all who yet cultivated the violin sonata form. His form became the unalterable pattern for all contemporary and succeeding Italian, German, and French masters. For contents, of course, there is no recipe, and in consequence hardly one of his imitators reached, much less excelled, him. A few only show individuality, like his own pupil Nardini, whose D major Sonata may be likened to a child's face looking out of the folds of a surplice with surprised, wide-open, sweet-worldly eyes; and Leclair, the French master, who succeeded in infusing into his creations some of his national traits of lightness, elegance, and piquancy.<sup>1</sup>

By himself, towering in unapproachable grandeur, stands alone John Sebastian Bach in his sonatas for violin solo. Although he also bows to the given outlines of the Corelli and Vivaldi sonata di camera and di chiesa, and uses Tartini's technique as a vehicle for his abstract thoughts—the same forms, like everything this giant touched, expand under his hands and appear almost new. In his

Tartini's  
Influence

John S.  
Bach

<sup>1</sup> Handel, who gave us some charming blossoms of his muse in this form, can scarcely be called an imitator or follower of the Paduan master.



# Story of the Violin

fugues he climbs; in his ciaccona he soars as on the wings of the eagle to heights from where Corelli looks like a mite and Tartini not bigger than a child.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> How the form of the old sonata changed into the modern sonata form under the hands of Emanuel Bach, Haydn, etc., belongs properly to the story of chamber music, to which the reader is referred.



### CHAPTER III.

#### THE SONATA DI CHIESA YIELDS THE SCEPTRE TO THE CONCERTO.

WITH Tartini under the auspices of the Church, the sonata di chiesa had reached its goal. Once severed from the Church it lost its *raison d'être*, and died to make place for something else; whether to the detriment of violin art I do not wish to discuss here. We may be convinced of the necessity of our children leaving the narrow sphere of their early associations to become useful men and women, and yet regret to see them go, and pine after them when they are gone. In these days of sloppy berceuses, stereotyped romances, stale mazurkas, insignificant musical bric-à-brac for the violin, we may easily regret the irrevocable departure of that noble, solemn sonata *à la* Tartini.<sup>1</sup> At all events, towards the middle and end of the eighteenth century violin art in Italy gradually drifted away from Mother Church. This was natural enough.

The worldly successes of Lolly, Ferrari, and many

<sup>1</sup> Is not the resuscitating process of these old treasures of the eighteenth century, which has been carried on by Cartier, Baillot, David (Hohe Schule), and Alard (*Maîtres Classiques*), and in our days by G. Jensen, Moffat, and others, sufficient proof?



# Story of the Violin

others would have, in any case, been too tempting for a young generation to resist long; but the strides which technique had made almost demanded outlets other than the Church offered, and forms other than those the Church had sanctioned and made popular. Moreover, halls exclusively devoted to the cultivation of instrumental music became more and more general in Italy, as elsewhere, and in the absence of concert-halls, people went to the theatre to hear their great violinists; so the latter became estranged from the old nurseries of their art, and the voice of the violin ceased to be an essential part of the Church services.

The growing supremacy of Germany in matters musical, Haydn's revolutionary influence on chamber and orchestral music, the increase of orchestras everywhere, and the steady increase of players who never had known the privilege of laying down their best at the altar of the Highest, who grew up with (in Protestant Germany) very different ideas of the best use of their kingly instrument—all tended to dethrone the *sonata di chiesa* and set the concerto in its place.



## CHAPTER IV.

### REIGN OF THE CONCERTO.

TORELLI is commonly called the inventor of this form of violin composition, but it will be found that essentially his concerto da camera, as well as the concerto grosso, is yet the old sonata, the difference being that while the sonata was usually accompanied by only a bass, Torelli raised the accompaniment from its position of absolute subordination to greater importance. This he effected by adding two orchestral (ripieno) violins, a viola, and occasionally a lute and organ. Torelli

The concertos of Tartini and other violin composers who wrote in this form were shaped after this model. Only Vivaldi, with the instinct of the reformer or novelty-hunter, occasionally added other instruments (reed), and varied his combinations; but—something of a musical pot-boiler as this “rosso preto” was—he poured rather poor wine into his elaborate vessels, and his attempts left no lasting impression or found imitators. So, under those circumstances it is not surprising that Viotti’s concerto fell like a thunderbolt on an unsuspecting world. It was a stroke of genius in Vivaldi  
Viotti



# Story of the Violin

its way as great as, some years later, the composition of the "Eroika" or the "Freischütz." Not only did this marvellous Italian wed the violin to the full orchestra, but he did so in the modern sonata form, only shortly before introduced by Haydn. And how finely he accomplished this feat! Nowhere the trace of an inexperienced hand; nowhere experimenting and miscalculating new effects; no crowding out the solo part with the new unwieldy masses. As in a perfect marriage, the two partners—solo violin and orchestra—mutually support and help each other (be it, that the solo violin, as it should be, has the first—and also the last word). Wise economy and yet nowhere monotony—happy contrasts everywhere; here the string quartette suffices to accompany, there two flutes with gentle discourse uphold the fluttering rhythms of the solo part, or a single oboe puts in a plaintive word. Organically, themes, passages, and tuttis grow out of one central idea, and a Mozartian simplicity is poured over all like sunshine over a lovely landscape. But one particular feature of this new principality in the realm of violin composition, the Viotti concerto, I would like to point out—viz., the passages. The *raison d'être* of the passage pure and simple is an often-discussed subject in these days of "never-ending melody." The father of the passage was doubtless the necessity for variety which in the fleeting world of music is as great as in the other arts, and made itself felt already in the sonata da chiesa. It was not a full-fledged passage then, it was only figuration, a



## Reign of the Concerto

gymnastic exercise for fingers and bow-arm and for the ear-drums of the listeners, which had been lulled into inactivity by a drawn-out aria or adagio. That the loose-fingered and loose-wristed virtuoso presently made out of necessity a virtue and passed off under the screen of exercise the desire for display, is as true as the justification of such proceeding is *discutable*; but the necessity of variety, the importance of the passage as a means to effect contrasts, remained—nay, it was heightened with the broadening out of the form into the modern sonata form, with its twofold thematic material as we see it in the Viotti concerto. The themes had to be set into clearer relief, in more effective light; pure thematic development, which plays such an important part in the larger modern chamber music and orchestral works moulded in the form of the sonata, being rendered difficult by the essentially melodic character of the violin, the passage happily met the difficulty—if it could not entirely solve it, and Viotti seized his opportunity with a masterly hand.

Modern composers of violin concertos have seen fit to avoid the passage by laying the thematic development partially in the orchestra, thus making the solo violin the subordinate, accompanying part. Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and after them Bruch, Raff, Saint-Saëns, and Brahms have thus created a new style of violin concerto, one of symphonic character, and in many instances with beautiful effect. Yet it is by no means proved that this proceeding which master-minds made successful has a right to supersede entirely the



# Story of the Violin

older style. Indeed, the unplayable, painfully ineffective, unviolinistic attempts (thematic gymnastics, one might call them) in some later-date productions for the violin, which do violence to its very nature, rather favour the opposite assumption. We only need to think of the piano concertos of Chopin and others where the passage in its natural element reigns yet supreme, and unfadingly beautiful, to prophesy a fair long life and possibly a fairer resurrection to the passage also on the violin.

If we look at Viotti's passages closer we find how effectually this master draws from the natural resources of the instrument. The pure *detaché* passages flavouring of the antiquated contrapuntal exercise are there yet, though they are mostly blended with relieving slurs, and can be made still more tolerable by additional dynamic shades; but more often in his best works we get double-string and other combinations—effective, new sounding, full of colour, fire, and triumphant vigour, and with these the master works his contrasts and dramatic climaxes.

Rode and Kreutzer, on the whole, walk in Viotti's footsteps, without, however, reaching him. Rode's concertos, while they bring out certain sympathetic sides, the lyric nature, of this noble French master, lack mostly manly vigour and the happy contrasts which form the chief charm in Viotti's creations; they are also less spontaneous and less organic in structure, the orchestral accompaniment appearing added rather than grown out of the solo part.



## Reign of the Concerto

In Kreutzer's concertos, on the other hand, the scholastic effort is too preponderating over the free gift of inspiration to yield pleasure as well as benefit to the player. Some very brilliant passages and a good deal of technical display (for Kreutzer!) cannot deceive us over the absence of real creative genius.

Coming to Spohr, it may be said that this great master laid some of the finest jewels of his muse before the throne of the concerto. He fills this form with his individuality almost to overflowing, and it gains, but also loses in proportion. The passages appear still more organically developed out of the thematic material than in Viotti's concertos, but since this material is in itself essentially of a cantabile character, it means indeed in most cases the cantabile carried into the passage, which, failing in its prime object—viz., to give variety—rather adds to than averts the monotony of the whole. This is a defect in Spohr's concertos for which all the noblesse of design, the masterly details, and many moments of great beauty cannot atone. His finest concertos are considered Nos. 7, 8, and 9, No. 8 being, and with good reason, the most popular; it is like an autograph which the great master wrote in the book of time, a thing of his inmost self for future generations to contemplate with reverence.

Molique gave us five concertos of irreproachable plastic structure, and with many graceful ideas—note the theme in the last movement of No. 5—but his music is cold; it is “Capellmeister



# Story of the Violin

music." The passages in them are like rows of rose-bushes with very few blossoms but plenty of thorns (for the performer). It is no wonder that Molique concertos, on the whole, have been, like Kreutzer's, relegated to the class-room.

What Mozart has given us in the form of the violin-concerto reaches occasionally sublime heights; how could it be otherwise? As for Bach, hear

Mozart Ysaye play the master's E major concerto; nothing more is wanted to convince any lover of the

Bach truly great and beautiful in music that these old concertos in the contrapuntal Vivaldi style belong still to the finest to which composers have been inspired by the fiddle.



## CHAPTER V.

### NEW PHASE OF THE CONCERTO.

WE stand next before Paganini. Just as this wonderful conjurer of the fiddle was reformatory in the development of violin technique, so also he infused into the Viotti, or old classical concerto—while leaving the general form untouched—new elements. And since then we have the modern virtuoso-concerto which received into its generous bosom all the modern achievements in violin techniques. It was the passage, of course, which fattened, often to the extent of starving the rest.

The  
Modern  
Virtuoso  
Concerto

Paganini wrote two concertos which were published, like most of his compositions, after his death. On both he left the impress of his powerful personality, and no matter what the musician may think of their intrinsic musical worth, they are a striking document to his originality. For this reason also, and because they are really effective, in spite of many antiquated trivialities, they have stood the test of time fairly well. The technical demands they make on the player are of a more substantial, healthy, legitimate nature than those in many other of Paganini's compositions.

Paganini



# Story of the Violin

On this stock Lipinski grafted his pompous, somewhat bombastic, and now seldom heard "Militär Concert," and Ernst his Concerto in F# minor, the fruit of his individuality as much as perhaps the wish to outshine even Paganini in display of technique. A fine work this is though, and likely to remain a favourite with violinists, if not to the same extent with the general public, on whom the kind of difficulties that abound here is usually lost.

Next, De Bériot creates on the lines of this modern virtuoso concerto, yet in sympathy with the distinct nature of his graceful talent, his Concerto. De Bériot It is a compromise, one might say, between the eighteenth-century fantasie (of which more below) and the concerto *à la* Paganini. The traditional sonata (concerto) form appears mutilated, cut down to fantasie proportions, without quite losing its identity. Harmonics, staccati, etc., in short the Paganini technical apparatus is discreetly, but with a good deal of effect, employed. Once great favourites with players and the public, De Bériot's concertos have now on the whole retired from active service in the concert field. Superannuated warriors, they only frighten with their grim technical armour the aspiring intermediate at our conservatories.

In the concertos of Vieuxtemps, De Bériot's great pupil, we get an *édition de luxe*, "eine illustrierte Pracht-ausgabe," of the older master's work. Everything is magnificent here. Big passages



## New Phase of the Concerto

in diminished seventh chords, melodies in sixths and octaves, startling staccato runs, etc., alternate with a soul-stirring cantilene. Only somehow the soul is not stirred by them. Vieuxtemps's music is essentially cold, though it seems full of warmth. It lacks above all naiveté, simplicity, sincerity. He is happiest, because most in his element, in movements like the last of his E major Concerto, which literally sparkles and glitters with phosphorescent display in staccati, sautillé, etc.; or in the form of the *fantaisie*, as in the *Ballade* and *Polonaise*, *Fantaisie Caprice*, etc. His orchestration, however, is as clever as everything else in these concertos—it sets the passages off in the brightest possible light; moreover, the desire for thematic treatment and other *signalements* in the passport of the good musician is everywhere more or less in evidence, and helps to give Vieuxtemps's concertos a deservedly high place among their kind. They are still—though not so much as formerly—the fine war-horses for the big virtuoso. I say big, for it requires a certain grandeur of style—such as Vieuxtemps possessed himself—to do them full justice.

If we except the Hungarian concerto by Joachim (one of the most difficult works in violin literature), in which this master reaches out a friendly hand to the virtuoso without letting go the classics, only Wieniawski, with the fiery spontaneity <sup>Wieniawski</sup> of his talent, has been able, after Vieuxtemps, to fill the well-worn form. His second concerto is still



## Story of the Violin

waiting for a successor. It is the last virtuoso concerto, and one of the best too at that.

What Alard, Léonard, Bazzini, Prume, and others have given us are, generally speaking, feeblar production in the De Bériot concert form, with David and others about the same, or (in the case of Bazzini) greater technical demands on the player. Most of them have disappeared or are disappearing from our concert programmes like countless fantasies of the same period. Even David's concertos, of broader outlines and more musicianly texture, and once deservedly popular, have with one or two exceptions shared the same fate.



## CHAPTER VI.

### LATEST PHASES OF THE CONCERTO.

MEANWHILE, side by side with the virtuoso concerto, and little heeding that smart brother's temporary successes, the classical or Viotti-Rode-Kreutzer-and-Spohr concerto continued on its way through the nineteenth century. It halted first before Beethoven's genius until it had received its blessing. The mighty master's D major Concerto<sup>1</sup>—a tenth symphony with violin obligato rather—is and ever will be the pride of the fiddle-playing world. To it Mendelssohn added in his happiest mood the almost equally beautiful, though not equally grand Concerto in E minor.<sup>2</sup> To Mendelssohn speak of it seems superfluous—a gem such as even a great composer writes but once in a lifetime! Or could you imagine another like it by Mendelssohn? The idea seems like asking spring to blossom twice. Yes, how beautiful this concerto is, how transcendently beautiful it must have seemed to that audience which filled the

<sup>1</sup> Composed 1806, dedicated to Stephen von Breunig; but written for Clement, a distinguished violinist of the day, and played by him for the first time, December 23rd, 1806.

<sup>2</sup> Dedicated to David.



# Story of the Violin

small, old-fashioned concert-hall of the old Gewandhaus in Leipzig, one night in the winter of 1845, to hear this concerto for the first time, played by David and conducted by the composer. Ah, one could wish never to have heard it for the sake of hearing it once again for the first time.

Approaching our own time and the more recent phases in the life of the concerto, we find Max Bruch, with rare partiality for the violin (for he is not a violinist himself), devoting the—shall I say cream?—of his fine talent to the enrichment of the fiddler's repertoire. He wrote three concertos, besides an elaborate fantasia in concert form on Scottish airs and several other works. The first, in G minor, rivals Mendelssohn's in popularity, so well written it is, so fine all through, and grateful for the player. Generally speaking, though, this German master's later violin works lack rhythmical charm and gracefulness. The music goes, one might say, too much four-abreast. One would not mind seeing a little of this scholarly solidity sacrificed for the sake of those two above-mentioned characteristics.

Just the reverse of Bruch—full of piquant rhythms and other niceties—are Saint-Saëns's contributions to violin literature, among which stand out his B minor Concerto (No. 3) and "Rondo Capriccioso." But is not this music almost too clever to be true, too clever also to be really beautiful? It lacks the true ring of genius, notwithstanding many inspired flashes and the

Saint-  
Saëns, Lalo,  
& Benjamin  
Godard



## Latest Phases

incomparable attitude of the accompanying orchestra, which throws out the solo part as a polished sheet of bevelled glass the handsome form of an elegant woman. Favourites with violinists are also Edward Lalo's "Symphonie Espagnole" and Benjamin Godard's "Concert Romantique." The latter in particular is possessed of many happy individual traits adapted to the nature of the instrument.

Passing over the concertos by Raff (2), Rubinstein, Goldmark, Dvřrak, etc., which cannot be said to rank with the best or the most spontaneous of these masters' works, and perhaps for that reason have failed to become popular (not to speak of their effect being incommensurate with the difficulties they present), we reach, with Brahms (Op. 77) and Tschaikowsky (Op. 35), the latest in violin concertos. All due and profound respect for their magnificent genius; but if both (as well as the above-mentioned composers) had spoken a little less volubly in the orchestra, perhaps fiddlers would not mind, and still less the fiddles, poor things! We have heard them groan and moan, and scratch and squeak, under the strain of trying to make their gentle voices audible in the terrific onslaught of the orchestra.

Raff,  
Rubinstein,  
& Gold-  
mark

Brahms &  
Tschai-  
kowsky



## CHAPTER VII.

### DIDACTIC VIOLIN LITERATURE.

LEAVING now the concerto in its latest glory, we step back once more into the eighteenth century to gather up other—more modest—threads. With Geminiani (1740) and Leopold Mozart (1756) we had the first systematically-arranged violin methods, the one based on Corelli's teaching, the other on the traditions of the early Mannheim school. The study-material in both of them, however, was small—wholly insufficient for pupils' technical development, which became more and more urgent as the general standard of violin technique was being raised and difficulties in pieces increased. So next we find the, until then, barren field of didactic violin literature—the *étude*, the unaccompanied study for fingers and bowing and phrasing, cultivated. It has been perhaps the most liked, and therefore the most generally and happily cared for branch of composition for violinists. Unhampered by considerations of accompaniments, or by a rigid form in which only the more talented and scholarly could feel at home and at ease, the composer of *études* was able to follow his fancy, style, and technical predilection; and the result was that wealth of studies, *études*, caprices, etc., of every style, grade, and quality which in course of time has accumulated, and now forms the mountains which the



## Didactic Literature

student is supposed to climb before he may descend into the valley of technical perfection.

From the long-stretching sandy plains of this or that method to the pleasant foot-hills of Maza's and some other études, and thence across the stately chain of Kreutzer's "forty," Fiorillo's "thirty-six," and Rode's "twenty-four," and higher yet to the barren altitudes of Gavinié's études, past abysses of nerve-prostration and gorges of discouragement, until the awful glaciers of Paganini's caprices and the eternal snow-region of the fugues of Bach are reached and safely passed—is indeed a long way for the present-day pupil. Fortunately for him that he does not know it when he starts out;—the mountains seem so near and low to young and eager eyes.

A Long  
Way

The latest addition to didactic violin literature—a sort of St. Gothard or Mount Cenis Tunnel through the mountains, a shorter cut as it is supposed to be (though I am not sure of that)—are the works of Ot. Sevcik, the teacher of our latest fiddle wonders—Jan Kubelik, Kocsian, and Marie Hall. No one who has given these works a close and unprejudiced perusal can fail to see there a will and a master-mind fathoming the depths of violin didactics. It is a whole Darwinian world of finger and bowing development. Unless another comes next with a sort of flying-balloon method to carry fiddle students into the promised land, Ot. Sevcik's remarkable works may stand a good chance of becoming the violin method of the twentieth century.

A Shorter  
Cut



## CHAPTER VIII.

### A PRODIGAL

MEANDERING through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in company of the violin composition *in state*, the Sonata and Concerto, and the violin composition *en negligée*, the Method and Étude, etc., came a third, a sort of prodigal brother—the small piece, “Character and Fantasia Stück.” It was the oldest of them all, born who knows where and when? perhaps, in the tent of a minstrel as the cross-breed of a dance and a chanson. Jean Char-millon could doubtless tell us more about it, but we will not disturb him any more. Since the days when it imitated caterwauling and dog-barking and hens cackling, it sprouted many varieties. Not only Lolli, Woldemar, and Jarnowick, but Fränzl, Lamotte, Lafont, in short every travelling virtuoso had espoused it with fervency. It was after the Étude (which at best was only for the four patient walls of the study) the most congenial form for the violin composer in whom creative instincts and talent did not keep quite step with technical equipment and ambition. It was elastic as india-rubber, stretching in any direction, from an accumulation of

Very  
Accom-  
modating



## A Prodigal

mere runs and trills *à la* Lolli to an elaborate fantasia or a pretty romance and rondeau *à la* Jarnowick; and when it had reached the paradisiacal stage of the Air Varié, it made halt and waxed exceeding popular.

I need not tell you of the Air Varié. Its popularity at one time can only be compared to that of certain domestic preparations of to-day. It swamped the concert-rooms and parlours, and threatened to invade the kitchen also. The big and the small all varied airs. Paganini accommodated his devils in this obliging abode. Like the wild animals at the Zoo, they—pizzicati, harmonics, etc.—each had a separate cage to perform their tricks. Ernst, too, installed his gentler but not less exacting gnomes and fairies there; and De Bériot, Vieuxtemps, Bazzini, Alard, David, Léonard, Wieniawski—all “aired” varied airs. The Air Varié is practically dead now—it died from over-prodigality; but it left us its grandfather, the small piece.

Yes, the small piece, the “Character and Fantasie Stück,” we have still with us. Under a hundred and one names it figures on our publishers’ lists and lives in the hearts of the people. Now, the form in which Schumann, Chopin, Henselt, Stephen Heller, etc., have given almost their best on the piano—at any rate their most spontaneous, inmost self—the small piece should also be the form of expression best suited to the nature of the most graceful of instruments. But alas! nothing demonstrates more painfully the doleful sterility in present-day violin

The Air  
Varié

The Small  
Piece



# Story of the Violin

composition than the output in small pieces. What do we get? Is it not the Character-stück without the character, the Fantasie-stück without fantasy, musical slop for the most part, written for teaching purposes at the instigation of publishers rather than the sacred call of the muses? This is sweeping, and sounds hard, but look at our violinists' recital-programmes. Generally speaking, they have been fiddling away for the last twenty years or more on the same old effective pieces (I need not name them), just as they did on the Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and Bruch, etc., concertos, with an occasional loan from an old master. Paganini, Ernst, Vieuxtemps, and Wieniawski still must do service, and even their airs variés are suffered with a grunt from the critic.

What is the reason of this sterility? Has the genius for violin composition died out among violinists? Is it the devil's hoof, that legacy of Paganini? Are the muses shunning a generation which persists in shouldering the enormous weight of present-day technique? Has on this altar of technique been sacrificed the better, the more precious thing? Has the modern violinist no time for aught else than drilling his fingers and memorising his difficult solos when he is not up and about earning his bread by teaching or playing? Since the time of Mendelssohn and David (never mind the few exceptions) he has left it to his brother-musician the pianist composer and the Capell-meister to write violin-concertos



## A Prodigal

for him while he practised his fiddle. It was not so once in the days of Viotti and Rode.

I think, in spite of the Kubeliks and Kreislers, whose triumphs ring in our ears, our time will go down to posterity as a very uninteresting age in the annals of violin art. Will the future redeem the present? Let us hope. What is needed is perhaps not another Viotti who can write classical concertos, a Vieuxtemps, a Bruch, a Brahms, or a Tschaïkowsky who squeezes the fiddle like a lemon to get the most tone out of it for the sake of his orchestra. No; the violin world, I think, is waiting for its Chopin. It is waiting for the man who possesses the master-key with which to unlock as yet unexplored regions of poetry and beauty.

I am convinced the last word in violin composition has not yet been said. There are yet more treasures to be got out of this wonderful treasure-box, the Stradivari fiddle. Even the concertos of Beethoven and Mendelssohn, not forgetting Spohr, Ernst, and Vieuxtemps, etc., give us each in its way glimpses only of the wealth which is waiting to be raised by that Chopin of the violin. He will not be a Capellmeister or a pianist-composer who writes symphonies and chamber-music, and for a change also for the fiddle. He will be a fiddler, heart and soul, who lives, dreams, dies for the fiddle; who loves it with a great, beautiful love as in the old days of Tartini. Whatever he will give us, whether a concerto,

A very Un-  
interesting  
Age

The Last  
Word not  
yet Spoken

The Chopin  
of the  
Violin



## Story of the Violin

a fantaisie, or a song without words, it will be a new thing of beauty, adapted to, and grown out of the nature of the instrument as scent rises out of a flower. It will not be a long, winding concerto of the old orthodox style, for the violin tone is like the perfume of certain flowers, too exquisite to permit a surfeit; and a surfeit, who can deny it, we get in most modern concertos. In proportion to the sweetness of the native effect of the violin tone on the human soul, it palls sooner, and is in this way quite different from that of the piano.

Nor has the last been said in the way of accompaniment to the violin. Perhaps the last will be very much like the first: I mean a return to simplicity, transparency, to primary effects, only refined like gold after a process of fire. Is this struggling against impossibilities, as we can witness in the modern concerto, in the nature of the most gentle of instruments destined by form and tone to administer to the most subtle and refined of human emotions and feelings? Compare only the same violin in its true world among its own kind—the string quartett. Does it not sing most sweetly there? We have become accustomed to the accompaniment of a piano, although there is absolutely no sympathy, no relation between the two instruments, and their marriage in consequence is a sort of acoustical barbarity. It may be because "*les extrêmes se touchent*" that the combination has its abiding, peculiar charm for our modern ears; but whoever will say that some day a great one will not come to teach the world



## Postscript

that something else sounds better? Have we, perhaps, been just a bit hasty, as far as accompaniment for the violin is concerned, in throwing overboard the clavi-chord and spinet and kindred instruments for the sake of the concert grand? Perhaps there are pearls yet to be found among the effects once dear to our great-grandfathers and great-grandmothers.

This Chopin of the fiddle, then, let us hope for him. Perhaps while I write, the genius of the violin—the angel with the fiddle-bow—has already picked him out, and now bends over a squalling little figure in a little cradle somewhere in the land (I hope it will be England), and whispers into his ears: “Be good, be still, my son; thou shalt be the Chopin of the violin.”

### POSTSCRIPT.

And so I have finished the task I set myself—viz., to tell the story of the violin. I almost wish I could begin over again, to tell it better; so much more I should like to say, and so much more I ought to have said. But perhaps the reader will kindly remember that the subject is very complex—too complex almost to be dealt with in two or three hundred pages. He may remark that I have given a rather disproportionately large space to the consideration of the earlier stages of violin art as compared to the later development—disproportionate to the extent of suppressing all biographical notes on men so well known and



## Story of the Violin

interesting as De Bériot, Vieuxtemps, Joachim, Wieniawski, and many others; but I would say in my defence that since I was obliged to sacrifice details, however interesting, to generalities, I thought it more justifiable to omit where omission was least harmful to the appreciation of the whole. Personalities in the earlier stages were really synonymous with epochs. Corelli, Tartini, Viotti, Spohr, and Paganini, to whom I give much space, were the great corner-stones for progress; in the later stages personalities became submerged in the vastness of the whole, or stood out as only small projections from a smooth surface. Besides, as childhood and youth appeal to the imagination more strongly and in sweeter accents than manhood, so also does violin art in its youth as represented by those great old Italian masters. They lived with a young art, if I may say so, in a state of perpetual betrothal, with all its sweet delights, its little surprises and discoveries, its hide-and-seek of affections. Now it is a married state of long-standing, and though it may be a happy and prosperous one, many of the sweet illusions *d'autrefois* are gone.

Just fancy the elation and excitement of him who first discovered that by a certain knack, a little movement of the wrist, he could make his bow produce whole cascades of pearly arpeggios, or play twenty or thirty notes in one bow staccato, firm or light, like beads rolling off a string; or the delight, half-mixed with awe, of him who stole a first glimpse into that wondrous, undreamed-of kingdom of artificial harmonics. Our



## Postscript

ever-improved elaborate instruction-books leave us no room for new discoveries; they are like the official charts for the mariner by which he may safely sail over the great deeps.

Schools have lost their former-day significance; conservatoires with dozens of teachers have generalised what was once the precious property of a few, and turn out by hundreds young aspirants as clever as many a star of old.

I may also be found fault with for allowing undue space to the mediæval fiddler and his wretched fiddle. I agree. Perhaps he does not deserve it, but would you blame the story-teller for being a bit partial to some of his heroes? Perhaps it is because we know so little of him and he was so despised that he appeals to me.

Therefore I commend the foregoing pages to the indulgence of my reader. After all, it is only a story I purposed to tell. He who seeks more will find it in books which deal with the subject in detail. If the perusal of this work only helps to spread the love for "that dear fiddle," it has not been written in vain.







## Appendices.

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- A. SOME REMARKS ON THE NAME FIEDEL AS APPLIED TO  
THE EARLY ANCESTOR OF THE VIOL KIND—  
BOWED INSTRUMENTS IN THE WORKS OF  
AGRICOLA, GERLE, PRÆTORIUS, DEL FONTEGO  
—TUNING OF THE REBECCA (GIGUE)—OF THE  
EVOLUTION OF THE BOW—PARTS OF A VIOLIN.
- B. CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE SHOWING THE DESCENT OF  
VIOLIN PLAYING.
- C. VIOLIN MAKERS.
- D. BOOKS OF REFERENCE.







## Appendix A.

### Some Remarks on the name Fiedel as applied to the Early Ancestor of the Viol Kind.

Clearly enough defined as were the two principal forms or species of bowed instruments of the violin family in mediæval times, the names applied at different times to various types of either species by writers who incidentally mention them are very misleading. It is indeed difficult to find one's way through the maze of seemingly synonymous expressions. Thus we find the designations *fiedel*, *fidula*, *vedel*, *fiddle*, *viedel*, *crowd*, *geige*, *gigue*, even *lira*, *rotta*, *rote*, etc., to denote sometimes an instrument of the rebec, sometimes of the *fiedel* (early viol) kind. In many cases centuries lay between the actual existence of an instrument and the time when a name was applied by this or that writer to another similar one; therefore the muddle. The first real musical authors, *Virdung*, *Judenkünig*, *Gerle*, and *Agricola*, did not make their appearance until the beginning of the sixteenth century.

Ingenious deductions have been drawn by historians from the significant resemblance of the word *fiedel* with the Latin *fides*, *fidula*(?), *fidicula* and the Provençal *fideille*, with the intent to demonstrate the descent of the violin from the lyre and the monochord, both Greek-Roman instruments. The writer in Sir George Grove's dictionary remarks, for instance: "Given the lyre and the monochord, the violin was bound to be the result." Of course both these instruments may have helped to shape the form of the *fiedel*, and no one can reasonably deny the relation existing between the above-mentioned names, but does it prove anything beyond that? None



# Story of the Violin

of these writers, it strikes me, seem to make enough of the real bone of contention, the vital point, the thing on which the very existence of the fiddle hangs, the bow. Where did it come from, given the lyre and monochord? How capricious and misleading the names were which monks and others applied to instruments appears from Otfried von Weissenburg's *Liber Evangeliorum* (ninth century), in which the two-bowed instruments then in existence are called *fidula* and *lira*, although the latter is nothing else than a transplanted Arabian rebab (and bow) in a modified form. Latin was the common language for speaking and writing among the learned, the monks; and *they* only wrote about music. I venture to say that the word *fiedel*, *vedel*, *viedel* (*fidla*) was as German (or may be Teutonic, Gothic, Anglo-Saxon) as *fides* is Latin and *fidula* is supposed to be Latin; and as for *fidelaer* or *vedelaer* (*fiddler*), it is on the face of it much more likely to be an original Teutonic idiom than a derivation from any Latin word. What can be more natural than that a Roman soldier, or a monk during missionary work in a pagan country, when he met with an instrument hitherto unknown to him gave it a name which he was accustomed to apply at home to a similar instrument? If *fides* were used by the Romans and Latin-speaking Christians for twanged string instruments in general, as we speak now of the "strings" in the orchestra—he called the new instrument (though played with a bow) *fidula*, or he latinised the original Teuton word as closely as possible, calling the instrument *vitula* (see below). So also the Provençal *fideille* appears to me more like a Frenchified (*Spielman's French*) way of pronouncing *fiedel* than a complicated derivation from *fidula* (*vitula*), through the middle form—*fidi-cula*. But even if it were—which is quite possible, as by that time (thirteenth century) the *Spieleute* (minstrels) had long made the instrument their own, name and all—the word *fiedel*, *vedel*, would still remain the original and point to the instrument being not of Latin, but Teutonic (or if you will, Indian) origin.

I am not sure, but I believe that "*fiedeln*" in mediæval German meant drawing across. It is probably an Indo-Germanic idiom, like many others, and *fiedel* and *fides* may thus be still connected or related by the bond of a common origin on the banks of the Indus.



# Appendix A

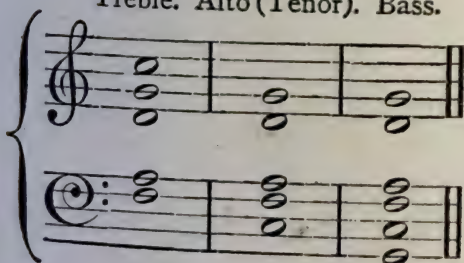
Branzoli, in his *Manuale Storico del Violinista*, mentions a certain Antiphor, orator, poet, and musician, who in 352 brought to Rome an instrument played with a bow which was called vitula (violla), and players of the vitula were subsequently termed vitulari. Branzoli does not give the source of this information, but the logical conclusion from it would be that the vitula must have been a foreign importation. Why not from some northern Roman province where it was at home? And how is it that it was not at once called fidula? My solution would be that vitula and fiedel were identical in the fourth century, while fidula was Spielman's (minstrel) Latin of a much later date.

Martin Agricola, in his *Musika Instrumentalis*, published 1529 at Wittemberg, mentions as existing at his time:

1. Grosse Geigen (large viols) mit Bünden (with frets) mit  $\left. \begin{array}{l} \text{Discantus} \\ \text{Altus} \\ \text{Tenor} \\ \text{Bassus} \end{array} \right\}$  with 4, 5, and 6 strings.
2. Kleine Geigen (small viols) mit Bünden (with frets) do. with 4 strings.
3. Kleine Geigen (small giguees or rebecs) ohne Bünden (without frets)  $\left. \begin{array}{l} \text{Discantus} \\ \text{Altus} \\ \text{Tenor} \\ \text{Bassus (or replaced by the} \end{array} \right\}$  with 3 strings.  
marine trumpet).

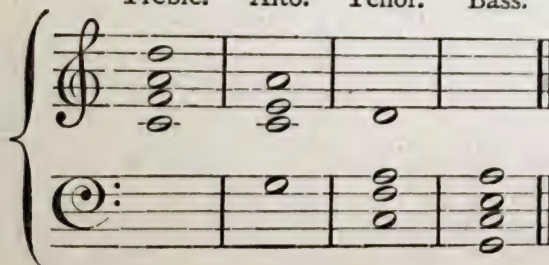
Tuning of Grosse Geigen  
(large viols):

Treble. Alto (Tenor). Bass.



Kleine Geigen (small viols):

Treble. Alto. Tenor. Bass.





# Story of the Violin

Hans Gerle, in his *Musick Teutch*, published 1533, at Nürnberg, makes a similar distinction between Grosse Geigen with frets, and Kleine Geigen without frets.

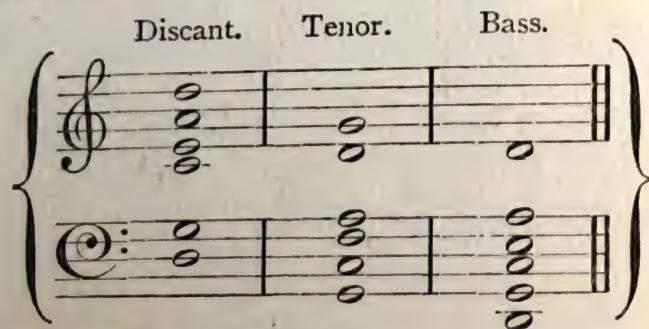
Michael Prætorius, in his *Syntagma*, published a century later (1619), divides bow instruments of the violin kind generally into two species—viz., leg viols and arm viols (viol da braccio), and subdivides them:—

1. Very large bass viols.
2. Large bass viols or viols da gamba.
3. Small viols da gamba of 5 different kinds.
4. Tenor (5 strings) and alto (3 and 4 strings) viols da gamba.
5. Discant viols (violettas) mounted with 3, 4, 5, or 6 strings of 4 different kinds as to pitch.
6. Viola bastarda (mixed kind) of various sizes and pitch.
7. Viol da braccio (arm viols) tuned in 4 different ways.

In his *Theatrum Instrumentorum*, published a year later (1620) at Wolfenbüttel, we have the violin family, as we know it to-day, complete.

Ganassi del Fontego (*Regola Rubertina*, published 1542, in Venice) gives information as to the manner the Italian viols were tuned. They had mostly 6 strings, and were tuned in fourths, with a major third in the middle, similarly, therefore, to Agricola's large viols. It is noteworthy that the Italian viols were tuned a fourth higher than the German ones at the time of Prætorius's *Syntagma*. They must have sounded brighter therefore, rather more—one might say, foreshadowing the future violin tone—than the German viols.

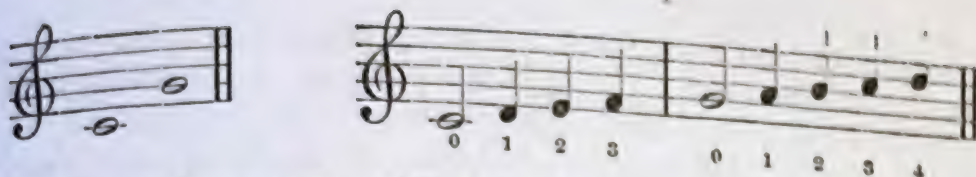
Tuning of Italian viols in Ganassi del Fontego's time:



Tuning of the Rebecca, or gigue with two strings, in the thirteenth century, and scale in first position:



## Appendix A



Tuning of three-stringed Rebec:



It is interesting to note that only rebecs were tuned in fifths, as the later violin.

### Of the Evolution of the Bow.

The bow, made of bamboo, is retained in India to this day more or less in its rudimentary state—*i.e.*, the hair is clumsily fastened at both ends, and the tension permanent. An improvement came with the Arabs, who at some time or other gave their bow a head or point where the hair is fastened, and a nut fixed in a dovetail notch in the stick. In this form it was probably carried into Spain in the eighth century. After various modifications in the course of the Middle Ages, when we find bows depicted either long or short, very much or less curved, according to the use to which they were put, the stick began, in the sixteenth century, to assume more and more the familiar shape. It appears sometimes round, at others pentagonal, and becoming smaller towards the top end. In the seventeenth century, with the bow used by Corelli, Vivaldi, and their contemporaries, the various degrees of tension (which we regulate now by means of a little ferrule) were attained by a contrivance called *cremaillère*. It was a band of metal divided into notches; a movable loop of iron or brass wire attached to the nut served to catch the nut to one of the notches. Tartini's bow, it will be seen, was longer, and thus rendered more flexible and more serviceable for producing the great variety of bowings and dynamic shades of expression which the master introduced in his music. But only at the end of the eighteenth century, with François Tourte (born in Paris, 1747), the bow received its last, and since



# Story of the Violin

then unimproved, shape. It is significant that Viotti was the first to use this new bow, and one naturally asks whether he had any share in its creation. Perhaps he assisted the ingenious bow-maker with his advice and experimented with him; at all events by his famous "sweep of the whole bow," in which the new (Tourte) bow surely had its share, he won for it immediate popularity. The Tourte bows are still the finest in existence, and one marvels at the unfailing instinct or insight of the maker, who, it is said, was wholly without education, being neither able to read nor write. To him is also due the invention of the little ferrule for regulating the tension of the hair.

## Parts of a Violin.

|              |                           |                         |
|--------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| All of wood. | Belly . . . . .           | 2 pieces (sometimes 1). |
|              | Back . . . . .            | 2 " (often only 1).     |
|              | Ribs . . . . .            | 6 "                     |
|              | Blocks inside . . . . .   | 6 "                     |
|              | Linings inside . . . . .  | 12 "                    |
|              | Bass-bar inside . . . . . | 1 "                     |
|              | Purfling . . . . .        | 24 "                    |
|              | Finger-board . . . . .    | 1 "                     |
|              | Neck and scroll . . . . . | 1 "                     |
|              | Nut . . . . .             | 1 "                     |
|              | Lower nut . . . . .       | 1 "                     |

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## Further Extraneous Parts.

|                                |          |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| Tail-piece . . . . .           | 1 piece. |
| Loop . . . . .                 | 1 "      |
| Button on tail-piece . . . . . | 1 "      |
| Pegs . . . . .                 | 4 "      |
| Strings . . . . .              | 4 "      |
| Bridge . . . . .               | 1 "      |
| Sound post (inside) . . . . .  | 1 "      |

13

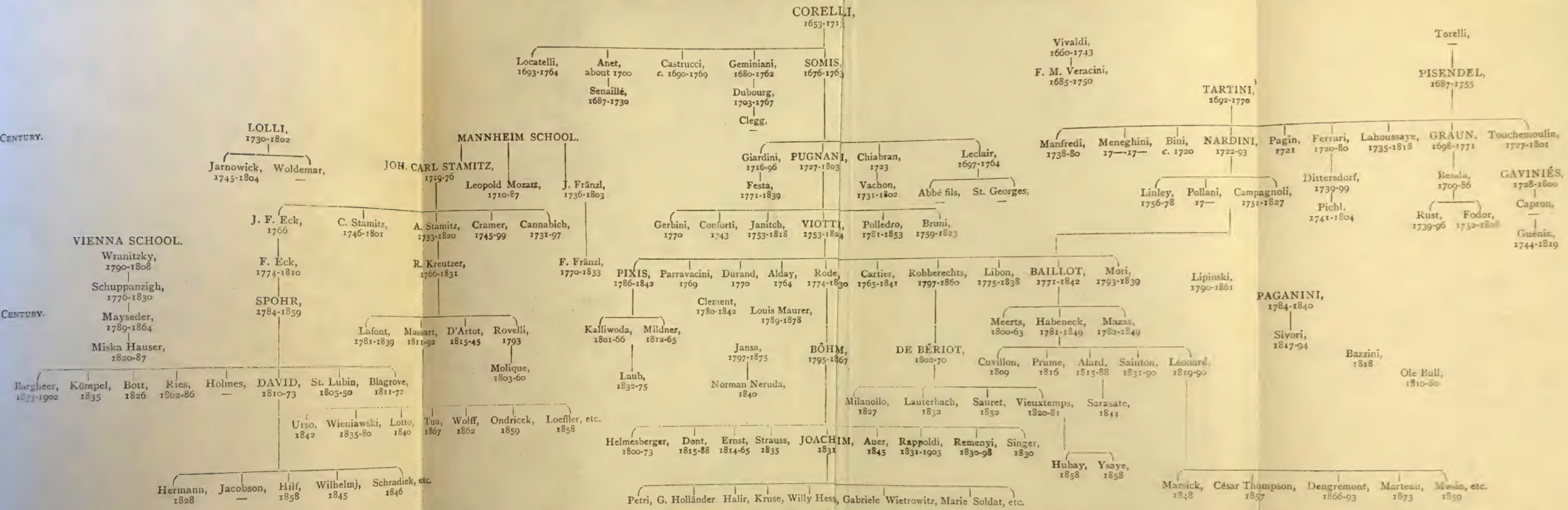


# APPENDIX B.—Chronological Table showing the descent of Violin-playing from Masters to Pupils since the founding of the Roman School; also a few small independent Groups of Players.

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.



If we admit also Kreutzer to be (like Baillot) an indirect pupil of Viotti, one who at least formed his artistic manhood on the superior genius of the Italian master, and Spohr to be an indirect pupil of Rode, whose style he admits in his autobiography to have imitated at one time more closely than any other violinist in Germany, we may indeed trace the violinistic genealogy of nearly every living violinist to the founder of the Roman school. I only wish to point out again that perhaps a little too much is made of the question of school. A great talent may be influenced by training (seldom the earliest instruction is with a great master), but it will eventually follow its own course. Or how are we to account for the striking difference in pupils of the same master? Can there possibly be any parallel drawn between Wieniawski and Teresina Tua and between the latter and Camilla Urso—all pupils of Massart? or between Alard and Léonard, Vieuxtemps and Lauterbach, Miska Hauser and De Ahna (pupils of Mayseder), or between Joachim and Remenyi? Thus not schools so much as great individualities have marked the development of violin art since the days of Corelli and Tartini.

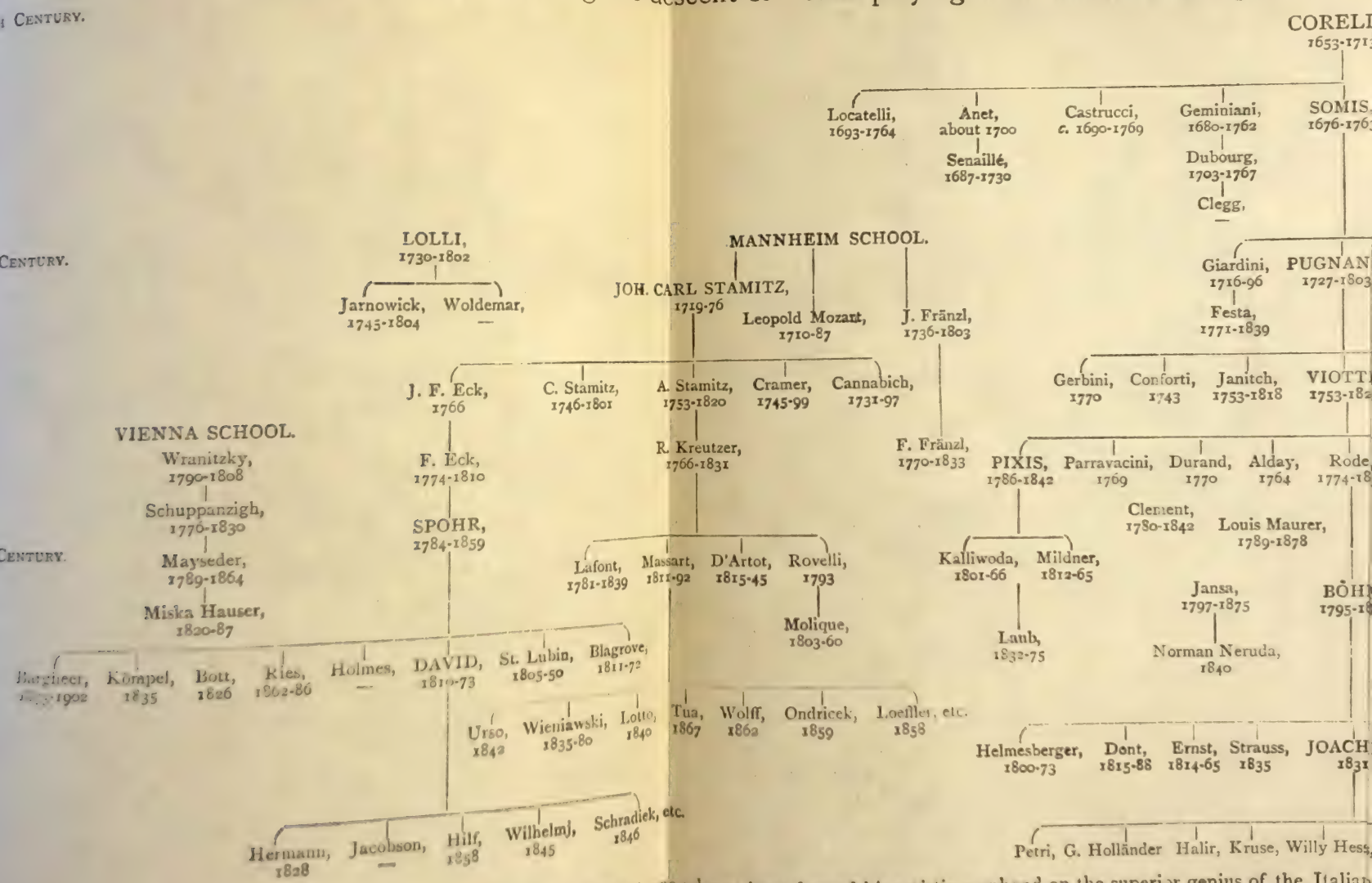


# APPENDIX B.—Chronological Table showing the descent of Violin-playing from Masters to Pupils since

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

NINETEENTH CENTURY.



If we admit also Kreutzer to be (like Baillot) an indirect pupil of Viotti, one who at least formed his artistic manhood on the superior genius of the Italian, more closely than any other violinist in Germany, we may indeed trace the violinistic genealogy of nearly every living violinist to the founder of the Roman school, and between the latter and Camilla Urso—all pupils of Massart? or between Alard and Léonard, Vieuxtemps and Lauterbach, Miska Hauser and De Ahna.



the founding of the Roman School; also a few small independent Groups of Players.

I,



master, and Spuller to be an indirect pupil of Rodé, whose style he admits in his autobiography to have imitated at one time school. I only wish to point out again that perhaps a little too much is made of the question of school. A great talent may be a difference in pupils of the same master? Can there possibly be any parallel drawn between Wieniawski and Teresina (pupils of Mayseder), or between Joachim and Reményi? Thus not schools so much as great individualities have marked



## Appendix C

### Makers of the Brescian School

(mostly imitators of Paolo Maggini).

Petrus Sanctus Maggini, presumably a relative (not a son) of Paolo.

Antonio Mariani (1568-1620).<sup>1</sup>

Savietta Budiani (1580-1610).

Matteo Bente (1580-1610).

Nella Raphael (1652-70).

Domenico Pasta (1700-30).

Gaetano Pasta (placed by Fétis among the followers of the Amati school).

Francesco Tortobello (1680), Florence.

### Pupils and Imitators of the Amati School

(chiefly of Nicolo Amati).

Giofredo Cappa, pupil of Jerome and Anthony }  
(1590-1640) } Cremona and

Ofredo Cappa, son of the above (1640-88) } Saluzzo.

\*Francesco Ruggieri (1670-1725) }

Giacinto " (1690) }

\*Gio. Battista " (1666-75) }

Vincenzio " (1690-1730) }

Acevo (1620) } Cremona

Ægidius Barzellini (1670-1700) }

Domenico Rogieri (1750) }

David Camillio (1755) }

Giuliani (pupil of Nicolo) }

<sup>1</sup> All dates refer only to time of activity of the makers.



# Story of the Violin

- \*Paolo Grancino (1665-90), pupil of Nicolo
- \*Giov. Bapt. Grancino (1690-1710), son of Paolo
- Giovanni " (1696-1720)
- Francesco "
- Mantagazza (1720)
- \*Carlo Antonio Testore (1700-30) followed also
- Joseph Guarnerius.
- \*Florentus Florenus, pupil of Nicolo (1685-1715)
- Felice Tononi (1730)
- \*Santo Seraphino (Venice, 1730-45), famous maker.
- Alexander Mezzadie (1690)
- Dominicelli (1695-1715)
- Paulus Palma (Lucca, 1760).
- Paolo Albani, pupil of Nicolo (Palermo, 1650).
- David Techler (1685-1743)
- Guido Tononi
- Paolo Castello (Genoa, 1750).
- Antonius Gragnani (Livorno, 1780-1800).
- Joannes Celionatur (Turin, 1734).
- \*Joannes Florens Guidentus (Bologna, 1740-80).
- Carlo Brochi (Parma, 1744).
- Giuseppe Dominichino (Verona, 1700).
- Jacques Bocquay (1700-30), see Violin-making in France.
- Altmann and others (violin-makers in Germany).
- Henry Jacobs (1690-1740), Cremona-Amsterdam.

Milan

Bologna

Ferrara.

Rome.

## Pupils and Imitators of Stradivari.

### Pupils and their Imitators.

- \*Francesco and Omoboni Stradivari.
- \*Carlo Bergonzi (1712-52) { Michelangelo Bergonzi (1730-50).
- Nicolaus Bergonzi (1725-60).
- \*Lorenzo Guadagnini (Cremona, 1695-1742) { \*Joannes Battista
- Guadagnini, father
- and son (Parma,
- 1750-85).



## Appendix C

- \*Alexander Gagliano (Naples, 1695-1730) {  
 Nicolo Gagliano (1700-41).  
 Giuseppe Gagliano (1740-50).  
 Ferdinando Gagliano (1740-1800).  
 Gennaro Gagliano (1700-50).  
 \*Francesco Gobetti (Venice, 1690-1720).  
 \*Domenico Montagnana (Venice, 1700-50) } thought by some  
 \*Gregorio Montade (Cremona, 1670-1730) } to be imitators  
 Tomaso Balestrieri (Mantua, 1720-50) } only.

### Imitators.

- Pietro della Costa, or Caesta (Trevisa, 1660-80).  
 Michael Angelo Garani (Bologna, 1685-1715).  
 Carlo Guiseppe Testore (Cremona, 1690-1710), imitated also  
 Joseph Guarnerius.  
 \*Giovanni Baptista de Gabicellis (Florence, 1745-60).  
 Gaspard Assaloni (1690-1710).  
 Hans Mans (Naples, 1710-50).  
 Lucas Maher (1714-1730).  
 Spirito Sursano (1714-20).  
 Francesco di Milano (1742).  
 \*Camillus de Camile (Mantua, 1720-50).  
 \*Vincenzo Panormo (1740).  
 \*Carlo Ferdinando Landolfi (Milan, 1750-60).  
 Catena (Turin, 1746).  
 \*Gio. Battista Gabrielli (Florence, 1745-60).  
 Antonio Bagetella (1782).  
 Laurentius Storioni (1780-1804), the last Cremonese maker.  
 \* Those marked with stars are the more eminent ones.

### Various other Italian Makers.

- Testator il Vecchio (1560), Milan.  
 Joh. Baptista and Peter Jacob Rugger (17th century) } Brescia.  
 Vetrini (1630), Mezzabotte (1720)



# Story of the Violin

Antonius Gouvernari (1601)  
Pietro Balestieri (1735)  
Giovanni Rudger (1650-1700)  
Francesco Ruger (1640)  
Sanzio Santo (1634)  
Nicolo Garani (Naples).  
Tomasso Circappa (Naples, 1730).  
Alexander Zanti (Mantua, 1765), followed Peter Guarnerius.  
Joh. Bapt. Lolio (1740).  
Bartholomäus Christophori (1750-70).  
Bartolomeo Obizi (Verona, 1780).  
Anselmo Bellosio (Venice, 1750-70).  
Fr. Gofriller (Venice, beginning 18th century).  
Renisto (1738).  
Nicolo Gusetto (1738).  
Nicolas Gulletto (1790).  
Petrus Joh. Montegratia (1780).

## French, English, and German Violin-makers.

### FRENCH.

Bourdat, Sebastian (Mirecourt, 1620).  
Castagnery, Jean Paul (Paris, 1655-65).  
Médard, Nicolaus (17th century).  
Paul, Saint (17th century).  
Niggel (end of 17th century).  
Médard, François (Paris, 1710).  
Despont, Antoine (Paris, beginning 18th century).  
Bocquay, Jacques (Paris, 1700-30).  
Vuillaume, John (Mirecourt, 1700-40).  
De Comble, Ambroise (1730-60).  
Gaviniés (Paris, 1734).  
Verron (Paris, 1720-50).  
Pierray, Claude (1725).  
Chapuy, Augustinus (1765).  
Guersan, Louis (1760).  
Lupot, François (1758).  
Lupot, Nicolaus, son of the above (born 1758, died 1824).



## Appendix C

Fendt (Paris, 1780).  
Pique (Paris, 1792).  
Pons (Paris, 1790).  
Nicola (Paris).  
Claudot, Charles (Mirecourt).  
David (Paris).  
Vuillaume, J. B. (born 1799, died 1875).  
Gand, François (1802).  
Chanot, François (1788-1824).  
Modessier (Paris, 1810).  
Miremont (Paris).  
Sylvestre (Lyon, 1835).  
Rambeaux (Paris, 1840-60).  
Simoutre, N. E. (Bâle, 1880).

### ENGLISH.

Raymann, Jacob (at Ye Bell Yard, Southwark, 1648).  
Pamphilon, Edward.  
Norman, Barak (1688-1740).  
Urquhardt (17th century).  
Addison, William (1670).  
Cole, Thomas (near Fetter Lane, Holborn, 1690).  
Cuthbert (17th century).  
Banks, Benjamin (Salisbury, 1727-85).  
" " son (Salisbury, 1754-1820).  
Kennedy, Alexander (1700-86).  
" John (1730); Thomas Kennedy (1784-1810).  
Barret, John (at the "Harp and Crown," Piccadilly, 1718).  
Collier, Samuel (1775).  
Collingwood, Joseph (1760).  
Johnson, John (1750).  
Jay, Henry (1750).  
Thompson, Robert (St. Paul's Churchyard, 1749).  
Marshall, John (1750).  
Wamsley, Peter ("Golden Harp," Piccadilly).  
Conway, William (1750).  
Crowther, John (1760-1810).  
Dickinson, Edward (1750).



# Story of the Violin

Duke, Richard (Holborn, 1768).  
Botts, John (1755-1823).  
Preston, John.  
Fendt, Bernard (1756).  
    „ B. Simon and Jacob Fendt (1815).  
Dodd, Thomas.  
Forster, William, father, son, and grandson (1739-1824).  
Hare, Joseph.  
Morrison, John (1780-1822).  
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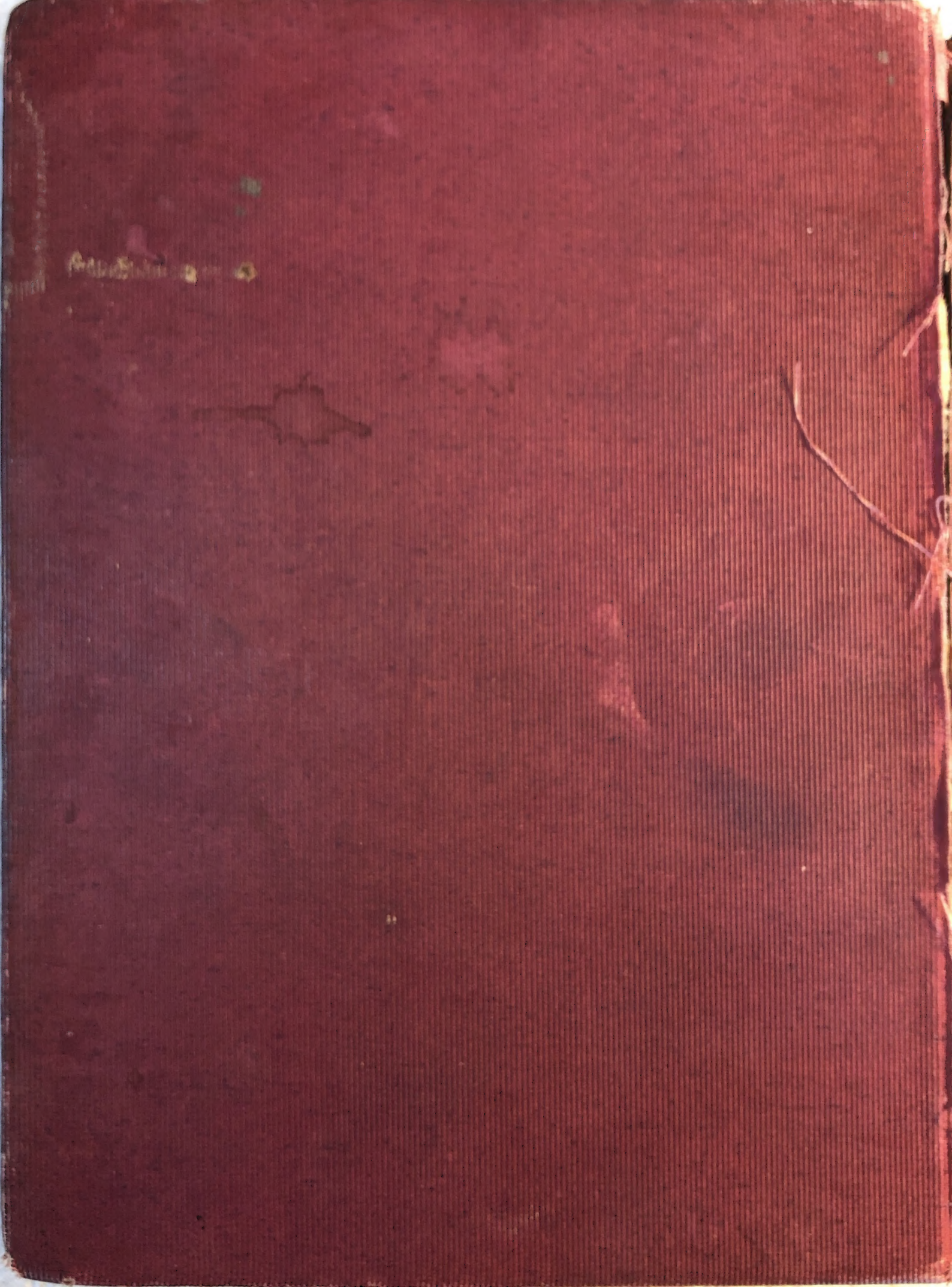
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